The Nation

February 13, 1989 $1.75 U.S./$2.25 Canada

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EDITORIAL

REGAIN THE BODY POLITIC

Sixteen years after *Roe v. Wade*, the battle over abortion has come down to a conflict between the Constitution and the Bible, and neither text seems able to impose a solution. Antiabortion activists are waging a ferocious fight in the streets and in the media, but their holy war cannot produce a popular consensus against *Roe*, the terms of which continue to be supported by a majority of Americans. At the same time, many partisans of free choice continue to look to the Constitution for their salvation, hoping against hope that an increasingly conservative Supreme Court will listen to reason and uphold their rights.

But politics, rather than reason or religion, is at the heart of the struggle, and it is only through political action that women's reproductive rights will be confirmed. Early on, antiabortion forces realized that their cause could best be advanced in coalition with a right-wing social agenda. President Reagan, and now President Bush, have gratefully used the heaven-sent constituency as a core around which to organize a patriotic, patriarchal, racist and repressive movement. The payoff is made in the support successive Republican Administrations give to antiabortion legislation, litigation and appointments.

Like so many civil rights and civil liberties established in the 1960s and after, a woman's right to control her body is in danger of erosion unless political power is organized in opposition to the reactionary right. As the other side knows very well, that power must come from the base, from the millions of women who have had abortions, who want to have the choice or who feel a sense of solidarity with others so situated. Grass-roots feminism, once a growing force, has withered since the 1970s. But not until a movement is revived—and expanded across lines of race, class, gender and culture—will women's self-evident rights be secured.

UNINTELLIGENCE SERVICE
Norman Birnbaum

THE U.S., DRUGS AND BOLIVIA
Penny Lernoux

THE DALKON BANKRUPTCY
Ruth Shereff

RACE CLASHES IN NANJING
Raymond Seidelman

MISSISSIPPI SUMMER
Nicolaus Mills

PAUL DE MAN: 'RESPONSES'
Jon Wiener

AIDS AS APOCALYPSE

THE DEADLY COSTS OF AN OBSESSION

DARRELL YATES RIST

In seasons of pestilence, some of us will have a secret attraction to the disease—a terrible passing inclination to die of it. And all of us have like wonders hidden in our breasts, only needing circumstances to evoke them. —*Charles Dickens,* A Tale of Two Cities

Not long ago, while I was researching a book on the lives of gay men across America, a writer friend offered me an unsettling view of gay San Francisco. Rob Goldstein had no use for the polish and smugness of the Castro, the Promised Land for homosexuals; he toured me instead through the disenfranchised Latino gay life of the Mission district and the destitution of the Tenderloin. In the Tenderloin, I met homeless gay men with AIDS and gay teen-age runaways who risked their lives bartering sex for meals and drugs, hustling on every street corner.

I had just spent a night among those abandoned adolescents when, at a dinner in the Castro, I listened to the other guests talk about nothing but AIDS, the dead, the dying—which to their minds included every gay man in the city: fashionable hysteria. "This," one of them actually said, "is the only thing worth fighting for." Not long before, I'd heard Larry Kramer, playwright and AIDS activist, say something like that too, and had felt, in that suffocating moment, that finally we'd all gone suicidal, that we'd die of our own death wish.

Though I tried above all to empathize with my tablemates' wretchedness,

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LETTERS.

FIRED UP

New York City

Stuart Klawans is way off base in his review of Alan Parker's film *Mississippi Burning* ["Films," Jan. 2]. Klawans knows that the movie's faults include its concentration on white characters and focus on F.B.I. agents, but he loves it anyhow. It's "intelligent" and "deeply affecting" and "its heart and mind are in the right place."

If there are any "unsympathetic" viewers, Klawans urges that they should have their vital signs checked if they do not like the way the civil rights movement is portrayed. I think my vital signs are all right, or at least they were when I last checked, and I think that the serious distortions in this film outweigh its virtues.

This *is* a well-acted, well-photographed story. It *does* show Klan violence against black people in all its despicable horror. But while Alan Parker has deliberately chosen a well-known historical incident from a famous social movement as background to his film about Klan violence, he has systematically denied the spirit of this movement.

Not only does the film have no central black characters but, as Klawans recognizes, the black characters who do appear don't even have names. What would he say about a movie about the women's movement that has as its central characters two men and in which the female characters don't have names?

Black people in *Mississippi Burning* are passive, listless victims. The hero, on the other hand, an energetic, lovable down-home type, is a former Mississippi sheriff. I have to pause here. Does Klawans know what it means to have been a Mississippi sheriff before 1964, or about the complicity in terror that such a job entailed?

And then we come to the role of the F.B.I. For those of us who witnessed the horrors with our own eyes (I was in Greenwood, Mississippi, in the summer of 1964 as a staff member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and saw F.B.I. men standing around with their little notebooks—when they weren't cozying up to the very people who were perpetrating the violence—the "heroism" of F.B.I. characters is a sickening travesty. The idea that, as the film would have it, the F.B.I. used a black "special agent" to threaten a white mayor in Mississippi is beyond absurd. The F.B.I. had no black agents whatever in 1964 and had few contacts with the black community in the South, which by and large distrusted the F.B.I.'s role.

This movie is really the same story we've seen a hundred times: a buddy movie about two men, one a regular type and the other a renegade, who take on the bureaucracy and the "bad guys"—this time the bad guys are the Ku Klux Klan. We're all so desperate for any little ray of social activism in the movies that *Mississippi Burning* has got a lot of people confused, including, as one would expect, Vincent Canby of *The New York Times*. Unfortunately, it also includes *The Nation*.

The really sad part of all of this is that if people like Klawans praise movies like *Mississippi Burning*, audiences will continue to be fed buddy movies in various guises and other such commercial fare. Meanwhile, we will all be deprived of seeing the real courage and dignity—and tragedy—in our history.

Dorothy M. Zellner
Center for Constitutional Rights

ONLY A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE

Solebury, Pa.

It's right to recommend *Mississippi Burning*. It is a thoroughly engrossing, well-acted drama that reminds us that legal segregation (apartheid) existed in our country in the not-so-distant past. Also, it correctly informs us that in the 1960s, as it had been since Reconstruction, the Klan's reign of terror was supported and often joined by local law enforcement officials and politicians. But *Mississippi Burning*, although rewarding as a movie and a historical reminder, has numerous and at times baffling distortions.

Blacks are only background material. There is only the barest suggestion that a movement is going on throughout the state to tear down segregation. Movement songs, the beautiful spiritual armor of that nonviolent struggle, are badly short-changed. Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner, especially Schwerner, were serious civil rights organizers; but what they did, what the movement was about, are completely neglected.

The movie ends in too-pat Hollywood style—right wins out over wrong, as the bad guys are caught and brought to justice. Really? In reality, the Klansmen were acquitted of all state charges of murder (not mentioned at all in the movie) and served only the minimum sentence on the Federal civil rights violations—not the maximum, as the movie's end implies. They literally got away with murder.

But clearly, for anyone who lived through the period (I was in Mississippi and Georgia then), the idea that the F.B.I. brought an end to a segregated South is about as ludicrous as saying that noble elements inside the Joint Chiefs of Staff were essentially responsible for ending the war in Vietnam. As I remember it, the F.B.I. was sometimes complicit in the terror, often antagonistic to the civil rights movement, and even more often a force that stood on the sidelines.

Somehow Hollywood finds a way to use even controversial history to prove "the system works." It would not be right to applaud this effort without pointing to such glaring omissions and distortions. The excuse that "we're only making a movie" is hardly enough to account for all this.

Abbie Hoffman

KLAWANS REPLIES

New York City

Thanks for writing, Dorothy M. Zellner and Abbie Hoffman. If you and other veterans of the civil rights movement feel the film betrays your experiences, then that is a grave criticism of *Mississippi Burning*.

But consider: What if Alan Parker had indeed made a film about black people in the civil rights movement? You and I and everybody else would be screaming, with full justification, that he had no right to tell their story. Reasonably, he didn't try. *Mississippi Burning* is not about the movement but about white people's reactions to it. In realizing this subject, Parker was far too negligent of his black characters—as I was at pains to point out in my review—but that hardly invalidates the choice. There really were white people in Mississippi. That's why the black people had such a terrible time in the first place.

So, for the sake of argument, let's grant Parker his subject. The question is, What did he make of it? Why focus on F.B.I. agents? I think that Parker and the screenwriter, Chris Gerolmo, wanted to address an old and troubling theme: the necessity in politics of endangering, perhaps destroying, individuals for the sake of helping a group.

That's what I liked about *Mississippi Burning*. Gene Hackman, as the old-time F.B.I. man and former sheriff, eventually yields to Willem Dafoe, the zealot who is more or less a mole within the F.B.I.—a Kennedy Administration newcomer who deliberately provokes confrontation, uses bureaucratic procedures to stir up trouble and clearly does not mind losing a few lives to win the battle. Dafoe is cold; he's rigid; he's all but inhuman. And he's right. Had the filmmakers pretended this character was typical of the F.B.I., I would have hooted and walked out of the theater. But Parker and Gerolmo tell us more than once that this man is an outsider and that Hoover is against the movement. The *real* F.B.I. man is Hackman, who initially would just as soon treat the episode as a missing persons case, shrug and leave. He's wrong; but he's the character the audience can identify with, all the way through his realization that he's involved not in a legal dispute among individuals but in a war.

I admired *Mississippi Burning* because I felt there was real artistry in the way the filmmakers developed this moral and personal conflict. But if one insists on boiling the film down to ideology, what is its message? I think it's giving audiences the disturbing news that the security of the individual is not the highest good and cannot be preserved at all costs. It's telling people that activism is necessary. And it's implying, very strongly, that the struggle continues. The film ends not with a courtroom triumph but with the image of the vandalized tombstone of a civil rights worker.

Stuart Klawans

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Manuscripts: The magazine cannot be responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts unless accompanied by addressed, stamped envelopes.

Publisher, Arthur L. Carter

President and Associate Publisher, David Parker; *General Manager*, Neil Black; *Advertising Director*, Chris Calhoun; *Business Manager*, Ann B. Epstein; *Bookkeepers*, Tanveer Mall, Ivor A. Richardson; *Art/Production Manager*, Jane Sharples; *Circulation Director*, Margaret Pyle; *Subscription Manager*, Cookee V. Klein; *Publicity Director*, Sarah Perl; *Director, Nation Books*, Elsa Dixler; *Assistant Advertising Manager*, Eamonn Fitzgerald; *Receptionist*, Greta Loell; *Mail Clerk*, John Holtz; *Administrative Secretary*, Shirley Sulat; *Production*, Terry Miller; *Typography*, Randall Cherry, Sandy McCroskey; *Nation Associates Director*, Sandra Zickefoose; *Syndication*, Jeff Sorensen; *Newsstand Sales Manager*, Jay Pearsall; *Special Projects Director*, Peter G. Meyer.

The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the first week in January, and biweekly in July and August) by The Nation Company, Inc. © 1989 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, Inc., 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. (212) 242-8400. *Washington Bureau:* Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. International Telex: 667 155 NATION. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: *The Nation*, Box 1953, Marion, OH 43305. *Subscription Price*: One year, $36; two years, $64. Add $14 for surface mail postage outside U.S. Claims for missed issues must be made within 60 days (120 days foreign) of publication date. **Please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Back issues $3 prepaid ($4 foreign) from: *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. *The Nation* is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Nation*, Box 1953, Marion, OH 43305. This issue went to press on January 26.

EDITORIALS.

'Stigmatic Harm'

The Supreme Court's nullification of the Richmond, Virginia, minority set-aside program, which had allocated 30 percent of the city's construction contracts to minority-owned businesses, is a disaster for civil rights. The sweeping majority opinion by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, an early Reagan appointee, not only overturns the Richmond plan but probably dooms any other state or local contract set-aside; its reasoning and ramifications may undermine employment and other affirmative action plans as well.

Minority set-aside programs are designed to help blacks escape the poverty and economic dependence resulting from centuries of slavery, segregation and discrimination. They have proven quite successful in fostering minority businesses. Some 190 cities and thirty-six states adopted them

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after a 6-3 majority of the Supreme Court, recognizing the widespread discrimination in the construction industry, approved a Federal set-aside program in 1980.

The Court now requires that such plans undergo the same "strict scrutiny" as official actions working *against* minorities. This is lawyer talk for insisting that they be adopted only as a last resort in the rarest of circumstances and by requiring proof of specific instances of antiminority discrimination. Thus, the Court equated a history of brutal racism against blacks with the disadvantages imposed on present-day whites by the loss of some government contracts. "Classifications based on race carry a danger of stigmatic harm [and] . . . may in fact promote notions of racial inferiority," wrote O'Connor. Quite true, and that's precisely why the decision is so perverse. No one can seriously believe that white contractors denied government business suffer any "stigmatic harm" or "notions of racial inferiority." As for the minority businesses, if that's what Justice O'Connor is worried about, they haven't seemed to mind the "stigma."

O'Connor also expressed concern that affirmative action plans may lead to "a politics of racial hostility." The experience of the past fifteen years, however, is that affirmative action led to political turmoil only when the Reagan Administration tried to get local governments to undo their plans, as happened in Indianapolis. In most communities where such plans have been adopted, affirmative action proved not a particularly controversial issue: Rather, it was widely accepted, although at times only after some grumbling.

The Court's ruling contains bitter ironies as well. The Reagan appointees (and, while in office, his Administration) have ostensibly been committed to judicial restraint in order to allow elected officials and the political branches to make policy free from judicial interference. Yet they have produced a judicial edict that effectively blocks any action on set-asides by state and local officials, preventing them from spending their local tax dollars as they will, no matter how fully they or the electorate support set-asides. Justice O'Connor and the Reaganites have also said they want state and local governments to be more active and the Federal government less so, a position frequently endorsed by George Bush as well. Yet, while the Court's decision annuls almost all state and local set-asides, it explicitly reaffirms the 1980 decision allowing similar Federal programs.

Affirmative action has also been attacked as helping minorities at the expense of lower-class whites. But the Richmond decision will not benefit impoverished entry-level white workers. On the contrary, it will help white construction contractors, many of whom are quite well-to-do partly because of the freedom from competition from minorities and women so long effected by the construction industry's notorious and pervasive discrimination against these groups.

And finally, it is especially ironic that the program struck down for lack of proof of discrimination is from Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, a city that, as Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote in an eloquent dissent, "as much as any municipality in the United States . . . knows what racial discrimination is."

It may be that in some cases set-aside programs will be able to meet even the Court's extremely restrictive criteria. Adoption of such plans, however, will probably trigger a lawsuit for heavy damages, and, except where minority voters are in the electoral majority, few municipalities and no states are likely to adopt such plans. Given the more-than-adequate resources behind most contractors associations, one can also expect that almost every set-aside program in existence will soon come under fire. Under all those circumstances, it is most unlikely that this affirmative action tool, responsible for the creation of so many minority businesses, will survive.

At this stage we still do not know the impact of this decision on programs involving set-asides for women. Technically, as one court in California has pointed out, the test for gender discrimination is much less strict. The logic of Justice O'Connor's opinion would thus lead to the conclusion that programs for women will survive, whereas programs for minorities will not.

In the Richmond decision, the Court has closed its eyes to the effect and persistence of centuries of discrimination and prejudice and inflicted a heavy blow on minorities trying to achieve economic independence. This vote may be only the beginning, however, as Ronald Reagan's appointees begin to make their presence felt. The Court will soon decide an important employment discrimination case, and other civil rights cases involving school desegregation and women are on the docket.

BETSY'S NEIGHBORHOOD

Elizabeth Pochoda, our departing literary editor, once wrote that "the craft of book reviewing scarcely rates much serious conversation, as if it were by now an affliction past cure or notice. Along with the police, with whom they are thought to have something in common, reviewers are suffered in our midst because we have not discovered how to do without them. Perhaps as a condition for enjoying my work, I don't entirely share this prejudice; like Norman Mailer, I think a good cop is a work of art, and fortunately find the same can be said of reviewers and their work."

Well, we will not soon discover how to do without Betsy, number one cop on *The Nation*'s culture beat for the past twelve years (with occasional time off for good behavior). But that's not merely because she is simultaneously an appreciator of low culture and an enforcer of high standards. She also is a believer in the power of the book to advance an idea as no other medium can.

Now we thank her and wish her well as an editor of *The New York Post*'s new Sunday books and features supplement. She's moving downtown but her neighborhood will always be the same—a happy place where books and the arts are taken seriously.

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They Got Rhythm

The picture was everywhere: George Bush and Republican Party chair Lee Atwater, guitars in hand, "jamming" with Sam Moore, half of the great rhythm and blues combo Sam and Dave. But the all-star r&b inaugural concert was more than a photo op. Atwater's dream show was a demonstration project, signaling his belief that the cultural and political anomalies of a black-G.O.P. détente are not insurmountable. Chairman Lee has vowed to go after the Democrats' lock on black voters, but his party shows no sign of doing so through serious policy initiatives. Instead, he hopes to demonstrate that some of his and the Bush Administration's best friends are blacks. The strategy is that, after eight years of Ronald Reagan's neglect, such recognition alone will suffice—especially if the Democrats cannot resolve what some of them call the "Jesse problem." Atwater's tactic also follows one rule of scorched-earth politics: Try to hit your opponent's base, where even an indirect strike can cause damage. With chutzpah to spare, Atwater may well make the G.O.P. soul revue a long-running act—if only just for show.

Unintelligence

The main West German intelligence service, the B.N.D., is reported to have known all along that German-made chemical weapons materials were exported to Libya, to have asked the regular domestic investigative agencies to back off the case—and then to have done little or nothing more. A report did find its way to Chancellor Helmut Kohl's office, where it came under the unsteady oversight of Kohl's deputy for intelligence matters, one Waldemar Schreckenberger, whose chief qualification is that he is a school chum of the Chancellor's. When Schreckenberger was in charge of the entire Chancery it was known in Bonn as "the Bermuda Triangle"—important papers simply disappeared. Perhaps Kohl's demotion of this hapless figure to his present job showed that the Chancellor is really quite with it: Why not set one bumbler to looking after an agency full of them?

Some months ago, in Washington, I had the pleasure of meeting the head of the B.N.D., Hans Georg Wieck. The occasion was a small seminar at which he was supposed to talk about parliamentary control of the German intelligence services. Half the Americans present were from the Central Intelligence Agency, including its former head, Richard Helms. Half came from the Congressional committees overseeing U.S. intelligence services. The C.I.A. officers were utterly envious of Wieck's relative freedom from serious oversight, the Congressional staff members astonished. I enjoyed the event, especially, when a German Embassy official sat down next to me and introduced himself by name. I said: "You are the resident B.N.D. liaison officer, aren't you?" "But, Herr Professor, how could you possibly imagine such a thing?" "Because of the very respectful way in which you set a glass of water before Herr Wieck." Obviously, we all have talents we can place at the disposal of the nation. These matters dispensed with, the seminar went on to world historical themes.

Wieck expounded, at inordinate length, his view that the B.N.D. provides not only his government but its allies with what he termed "geostrategic analysis." His disquisition sounded uncannily like an application for a foundation grant from one of our own professors of international relations. I was reminded of former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's remark that he found the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* a good deal more informative than the B.N.D.'s reports. I asked Wieck about Schmidt's judgment: He did not appreciate the question, and Helms rallied instantly to his beleaguered colleague's support. Someone then asked Wieck what he could tell us of his agency's evaluation of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. He declared that all that it had noticed was heightened activity by the group named International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. One sees why the Libyan problem seemed so relatively trivial to them.

Americans, however, have no particular right to condescension. Some months before Mikhail Gorbachev took office, I attended yet another instructive Washington seminar. We were addressed, in separate sessions, by the National Intelligence Officer then in charge of analyzing the Soviet Union for our entire arms and foreign policy apparatus (a C.I.A. official named Fritz Ermarth); by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, in charge of the Soviet bloc (Mark Palmer, now the U.S. Ambassador to Hungary); and by the National Security Council Senior Director for European and Soviet Affairs (Jack Matlock Jr., now the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union). Each was asked whether reform was possible in the Soviet Union, and each denied, strenuously, that anything could or would change.

It would be idle to expect our new Administration, in this respect, to be different. Robert Gates, former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, has gone to the National Security Council staff as deputy to national security adviser Brent Scowcroft. Gates, it will be recalled, is so tainted by his role in the *Contra*gate cover-up that his nomination for Director of Central Intelligence had to be withdrawn. His new appointment is clearly a reward from George Bush for services rendered in obscuring the new President's own trail. Gates has a doctorate in Russian and Soviet history but is a virtual stranger to the Soviet Union today—perhaps to maintain clarity of vision. He has insisted in the past months that nothing has changed in the Soviet Union, and we may assume that he will have a large role in perfecting a rationale for what promises to be the Bush Administration's initial approach to the dreadful possibility that the East-West conflict could end: an indeterminate stall. Intelligence services of all countries, unite: You have nothing to lose but your raison d'être.

The total picture, however, is not entirely grim. PBS in this country recently aired a superb British drama, *A Very British Coup*, in which the British intelligence services and the C.I.A. attempt to oust a British Labor Prime Minister. Introducing it as part of the Masterpiece Theater series,

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Alistair Cooke was at inordinate pains to explain that it was just a fantasy and an improbable one at that—unlike, for instance, *Upstairs, Downstairs* or Queen Elizabeth I playing Glenda Jackson. Recently *The Wilson Plot*, an excellent book by the British journalist David Leigh, has provided exact detail about the plot against former Prime Minister Harold Wilson by M.I.5 and the C.I.A. And, of course, there was the 1975 constitutional coup in which the Australian Labor government was undermined by the C.I.A. in collaboration with the Australian secret services because Prime Minister Gough Whitlam threatened to expose the agency's surveillance installation at Pine Gap. Cooke's absurd remarks are no doubt the product of his own congenital servility to power, but they do remind us that contemporary reality renders fantasy pale. NORMAN BIRNBAUM

Norman Birnbaum is a member of The Nation*'s editorial board and a professor at Georgetown University. His most recent book is* The Radical Renewal: The Politics of Ideas in Modern America *(Pantheon).*

UNCIVIL LIBERTIES.

CALVIN TRILLIN

Ronald and Nancy Reagan will now be living in the Bel Air section of Los Angeles, at what used to be 666 St. Cloud Drive. I read in the newspaper that the Reagans (who, as we all know, are just a tiny bit superstitious) arranged to have the address changed because in the Bible, 666 is the number of the Devil. So the new address of the house will be 668 St. Cloud Drive. That's all O.K., except now where's the Devil supposed to live?

You say that it's silly of me to worry about housing for the Devil, because the Devil doesn't actually exist. If the Devil doesn't actually exist, why are the Reagans changing their address?

It's true that in the high-rent district of Manhattan there's a well-known office building called 666 Fifth Avenue. The Devil could live there (I would assume that he spends a lot of time in Manhattan anyway), but I think of 666 Fifth Avenue as more of a business address than a home. Also, I've always considered it a particularly unattractive building; when it first went up, thirty or thirty-five years ago, someone said that it looked like the box the Seagram Building came in. I suppose if anybody at the time had thought to ask the architect why he chose to erect such a weird-looking structure, he might have said, "The Devil made me do it."

I realize that all of this is not the sort of thing that concerns President Reagan. He's never seemed particularly alarmed about people sleeping on the streets, so he's not likely to spend a lot of his retirement time worrying about where the Prince of Darkness lays his head. Cardinal John O'Connor of New York asked him the other day about criticism that his Administration had made virtually no effort at all to build housing for the homeless. This was when the President was a guest on the Cardinal's television show (just before receiving an award in New York from the Knights of Malta of America, which was described in the newspaper as an organization "dedicated to serving the sick and the poor"). Reagan explained to the Cardinal that most of the people who live on the street are there because they prefer that way of life.

A couple of days before Reagan spoke to the Cardinal, he told another interviewer that whatever piddling discrimination still exists against black Americans is caused partly by the fact that black civil rights leaders prefer it that way, so they can remain in the spotlight. It must be comforting to have such certainty that those who seem to be suffering while you thrive are suffering because they want to be.

I wouldn't have thought, though, that it was the sort of attitude that could get you an award from an organization devoted to serving the poor—particularly if you're someone who gives virtually nothing to charity and is fond of answering any question about people on the dole by one more telling of the story about the woman in California who picks up her welfare check in a Cadillac.

On the other hand, maybe the Knights were just trying to be patriotic: Citizens who do manage to convince themselves that homeless people prefer to be homeless must find it easier to follow President Reagan's parting advice about teaching our children to guard against the erosion of that high morale and optimistic American spirit that he is so proud of having built during his Administration. With the Reagan attitude toward the poor, the typical American family he was always talking about would have no problem at all with the otherwise inconvenient fact that a stroll down a typical American Main Street these days so often requires stepping around someone trying to sleep on a grate:

"Why are those people sleeping on a piece of cardboard over a grate, Mommy?"

"They like to sleep on the street, dear. They prefer that sort of life style."

"They like sleeping on a piece of cardboard?"

"That's right, dear. Some people prefer being the sort of people whose friends buy them $2.5 million houses in Bel Air, and other people prefer being the sort of people who sleep on pieces of cardboard over a grate. It's up to them, because remember what the President said in his farewell address: 'America is freedom.'"

"But isn't sleeping on the street cold and nasty and scary, Mommy?"

"Oh, no. Not at all. I was a little concerned about them yesterday, when I noticed that they were sleeping over a grate at 13 Main Street. We all know that 13 is a very unlucky number. But I noticed that they've moved to a grate in front of 17 Main Street. No need to worry about them now. They'll be just fine."

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

In the same week as the famous "dogfight" between American F-14 fighters and Libyan MIGs, which had newspapers gloatingly headlining yells of "Good Kill!" from the cockpit, I came into possession of a morbidly enthralling document. It is the recreational songbook of the 77th Tactical Fighter Squadron of the United States Air Force, based at Upper Heyford in England, just outside my old hometown of Oxford. It was from bases in England, you will recall, that the gallant attacks on Tripoli and Benghazi were launched in time for the evening news on April 15, 1986. It is also from bases in England that U.S. nuclear bombers and missiles would strike eastward if the day for which they were built should ever dawn.

So it was good to have an insight into the minds of the boys who hang around waiting for that day. Here, for example, is the song "Phantom Flyers in the Sky":

> Phantom flyers in the sky,
> Persian-pukes prepare to die,
> Rolling in with snake and nape,
> Allah creates but we cremate.
>
> North of Tehran, we did go,
> When the FAC said from below,
> "Hit my smoke, and you will find,
> The Arabs there are in a bind."

The themes of this ditty, which are racism, sadism and infantilism (and which reveal the stupid confusion between Arabs and Iranians that is so reassuring to find in pilots who fly over the Middle East) are repeated throughout the book. And as you might expect, the attitude to death is expressed in some hateful attitudes toward women. Nobody likes a bit of filth more than the present author, but I'm not being hypocritical when I say that "The Ballad of Lupe" strikes me as witless obscenity (punctuation as in the original):

> Down in Cunt Valley where Red Rivers flow,
> Where cocksuckers flourish and whore mongers grow,
> There lives a young maiden that I do adore
> She's my Hot Fuckin' Cocksuckin' Mexican Whore.
>
> CHORUS
> Oh Lupe, Oh Lupe, dead in her tomb,
> While maggots crawl out of her decomposed womb.
> But the smile on her face is a mute cry for more!!!
> She's my Hot Fuckin', Cocksuckin', Mexican Whore.

Intercourse with dead women is a recurrent theme. (Remember, someone went to all the labor of collecting these, writing them down and then committing them to print.) Here is the only quotable verse from "I Fucked a Dead Whore":

> I fucked a dead whore by the road side,
> I knew right away she was dead.
> The skin was all gone from her tummy,
> The hair was all gone from her head.

The next two verses are so tough that I will break my resolution to spare you nothing.

Then it's back to *Top Gun* stuff and the "Upper Heyford Victor Alert Song," where the crucial stanzas are:

> Leaving the orbit our pits start to sweat
> We'll asshole those fuckers and that's a sure bet
> Burn all those Russkies and cover 'em with dirt
> That's why we love sitting Victor Alert.
>
> RHAW scope is flashing, the floggers are closing
> SAM's all around us, the GUN-DISH is HOSING
> Flying so fast our hair is on fire
> Killing those Commies is our one desire.
>
> When the shit fills up your flight suit
> and you're feeling had, just simply remember that
> Big mushroom cloud and then you won't feel SO BAD . . .

Let us not be too literal-minded about this puerile nastiness. But let's remember that these guys fly expensive planes on nuclear alerts and that, in the same way that some Jewish jokes are funny but Holocaust jokes are not, some versions of humor are not cathartic. In *The Washington Post* for January 15, the paper's very conservative military correspondent, George C. Wilson, wrote an absorbing article about the lessons of the Iranian Airbus and Libyan MIG incidents, in which he said:

> After decades of extreme caution in the twilight zone between all-out peace and all-out war, the United States is now practicing a policy of shoot first and ask questions later. . . . It could yank the country into World War III. Gunners firing at radar dots, rather than an enemy they can see with their own eyes, can easily misread dials and screens. But, under current guidance, they are under pressure to act before they can verify a threat.

Wilson added that "the attitude of our national leaders, especially during the Reagan administration, has evolved into one of 'better to shoot first than second.' " If this is so, as it appears to be, then the macro-Reaganism of the commanders seems to be well matched by the micro-Reaganism on offer in the *77th Tactical Fighter Squadron Songbook*. The chief difference at mess level is that the singers evidently wish they *could* see their targets, if only in order to watch them burn up and die.

The songbook is larded with cute Rambo-like quotations and extracts, all of which are based on the conceited notion of pilots as an elite force who can screw all the dead and live women they want. One of these brash quotations reads, "Only the spirit of attack, born in a brave heart, will bring success to any fighter aircraft, no matter how highly developed it may be."

That, in the age of the computerized "kill," is of course untrue. But the source for the admiringly cited anachronism is given by the U.S.A.F. compilers as Adolf Galland. Now, which do you think is more alarming, that the 77th Tactical Fighter Squadron is quoting one of Hitler's chief Luftwaffe pilots knowingly, or that it is quoting him without the faintest idea of who he was? What's the matter with me? Can't I take a joke?

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ARTICLES.

THE U.S. IN BOLIVIA

Playing Golf While Drugs Flow

PENNY LERNOUX

Riberalta, Bolivia

There may be a "war on drugs" in Washington, but nobody has heard so much as a shot in this jungle town in the Bolivian Amazon. Although Riberalta has three military bases, built at U.S. instigation, and U.S. Army personnel and Drug Enforcement Administration agents are frequently in the area, the cocaine business is booming.

Residents casually point out the local coca paste factories, one of which is right in the middle of town. *Pitillos*—cigarettes laced with cocaine—are openly sold in the plaza. Supplies come from the surrounding jungle, where coca leaf plantations are located. How many exist in the Beni, as this northwestern corner of Bolivia is called, is anyone's guess, but several dozen can be seen from the air, usually with a telltale dirt runway for small aircraft, which fly the paste to refining laboratories in Colombia.

Local sources say the traffickers pay off the police and that those who protest against drug dealings receive death threats. The threats are taken seriously because of drug-related assaults and killings; since last year, when the first and only protest meeting was held, no one has dared state publicly that Riberalta needs a cleanup.

Municipal authorities have also turned a blind eye to the traffic because it has brought unprecedented prosperity. Although most houses are merely mud huts and the red dirt streets are unpaved, this town of 30,000 boasts a modern hospital, a telephone system, a well-stocked market and theaters. Almost every house has a television antenna, and the streets are crowded with motorcycles imported from neighboring Brazil. So profitable is the drug trade that local business interests are planning to construct an international airport to serve the Beni.

The town's three military bases also show signs of prosperity, not because of the drug traffic—there is no evidence of involvement by the Riberalta military command—but because of U.S. funding. The ostensible aim of U.S. aid is to wipe out the drug traffickers. In fact, the Pentagon is barely interested in coca leaf plantations: Its only concern in the Beni is to establish an outpost for the U.S. Southern Command, which is based in Panama.

The Beni and the neighboring department of Pando cover 53,000 square miles, much of it along the borders of Peru and Brazil. On a map the region looks strategically important because it lies in the center of South America. But on the spot, in Riberalta or along the Beni River, it seems much less so. Although such Brazilian border towns as Guajará-Merim can be reached by road from Riberalta, they are of no significance in terms of population or natural resources; in any case, Brazil is capable of patrolling its own frontiers. No passable roads connect the Beni with Bolivia's main cities, and the only influence the region exerts on the politicians in La Paz is through cocaine money. Nevertheless, a document prepared by the Southern Command in 1987 and leaked by dissident military sources in South America shows that the Pentagon intends to use the Beni as a staging area for the rapid deployment of U.S. troops in the event of insurrections in the region. According to the document, joint U.S.-Bolivian military maneuvers in the area, planned for five consecutive years, would enable the Southern Command to "fulfill its objectives in Latin America"—meaning that it would be able to establish a permanent military presence in South America for the first time since World War II. The idea, say local analysts, is to prevent a repetition of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran rebellions through "early intervention" by U.S. Special Operations Forces.

Since no guerrillas operate in Bolivia or Brazil, and Chile is more than 800 miles away, across the Andes, the assumption is that the target is Peru, where the Maoist group Sendero Luminoso ("Shining Path") has been gaining strength. But the guerrillas' stronghold in the Andean valley of Ayacucho is nowhere near the Beni. Nor is there any reason for the Sendero to move eastward into the largely uninhabited jungles. It takes travelers three weeks to a month by river to reach the Peruvian border from Riberalta, and another jungle must be crossed to reach the foothills leading to Ayacucho. Nevertheless, the U.S. Army has been holding maneuvers with Bolivian troops in the Beni in order to prepare for a possible onslaught by Sendero. As one U.S. soldier candidly told an American missionary here, "The whole thing is dumb."

The original pretext for a U.S. buildup was to combat the drug traffic. But after the first maneuvers, in 1986, which netted not a single trafficker, that pretense was dropped. The 1987 maneuvers, known as Absalom (presumably for the biblical traitor), involved 350 U.S. troops and more than 1,000 Bolivian soldiers, and were aimed at preparing for a "low-intensity conflict," the new name for counterinsurgency. Although follow-up exercises were to be held last year, they were suspended because of the scandal caused by Absalom. Most of the country's political parties denounced the operation as a violation of national sovereignty, and there were widespread complaints in the local press. When the Bolivian Congress called the country's Defense Minister before it to explain U.S. intervention, he turned up drunk. "There should be a military takeover of the government," he slurred into the microphone after several congressmen had expressed their disgust. The performance, which was shown on television, cost him his job. It also showed up Absalom for what it was—dumb.

Nevertheless, Washington has continued to finance and supply an expanding network of military bases in the Beni,

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replete with U.S. advisers. Two new bases are under construction, at Puerto Rico near Riberalta and at Porvenir on the Brazilian border, while others, including those here and at the departmental capital at Trinidad, are being modernized. Riberalta's army base, for example, boasts several new buildings and is patrolled by smart-looking soldiers in polished boots. (In the past most went barefoot.)

Such changes have been possible thanks to at least $50 million in U.S. aid, part of which is funneled through the military's development corporation, which does not depend on the bankrupt central government. After a recent visit by Gen. Robert Herres, vice chair of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Defense Minister Alfonso Revollo announced that Washington was granting an additional $25 million in military aid in exchange for Bolivia's agreement to receive three special U.S. military missions a year to train Bolivian troops.

Meanwhile, the Bolivian Army has acquired four Hercules aircraft, in addition to equipment donated by the U.S. Army during previous military maneuvers. None of this matériel is to combat the drug traffic: Although local residents report that U.S. military advisers and agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration frequently visit the Beni's military bases, the local command has shown no interest in the cocaine traffic flourishing under its nose.

Indicative of this lack of interest was the failure of either U.S. or Bolivian officials to close down an enormous coca paste factory operating in the eastern jungles near the Brazilian frontier. A four-man Bolivian-Spanish scientific expedition accidentally stumbled on the factory in September 1986; three were killed by the traffickers but a fourth escaped. Subsequently it became known that the D.E.A.'s men in Bolivia had known of the factory's existence two months beforehand but had failed to tell the Bolivian authorities about it. When the government requested help from U.S. troops, then in Bolivia for the purported antidrug maneuvers, the Americans demurred, claiming first that their Bell helicopters did not have enough fuel for the trip, then that a battery was missing and finally that they could not undertake such an operation without the approval of the Southern Command chief, who happened to be unavailable because he was "playing golf at the other end of the Panama Canal." "Nobody in this country believed that story," commented a Bolivian government official.

According to Francisco Kempff, son of one of the murdered scientists and a director of the national park where the factory was discovered, it is still operating, despite the fact that he sent detailed information on the processing facility to the D.E.A. and the Bolivian government. Meanwhile, two men arrested in connection with the three killings were freed by judges in Santa Cruz, a jungle metropolis and major drug center of the Beni. That action prompted two members of the Bolivian Supreme Court to demand the resignations of the entire Santa Cruz judiciary because of its leniency toward drug traffickers. (The judges retorted that the order from above was unconstitutional.) Although the head of the congressional committee responsible for investigating the affair alleged that high government authorities, including a former Interior Minister and members of the national police, were protecting the traffickers, he failed to produce any proof. A congressman who purportedly had such evidence was murdered on the streets of Santa Cruz.

Proof of official connivance does exist, including documentation obtained by the Catholic Church on the forcible use of street children by the Leopards, D.E.A.-trained antidrug police, to tread coca leaves into paste. After two teen-agers died at a police-protected paste factory near Cochabamba in central Bolivia, church workers conducted an exhaustive investigation, including autopsies and interviews with witnesses, that showed the youths had been illegally arrested, forced to tread the leaves in a vat with kerosene and sulfuric acid and then been killed—presumably to prevent them from talking. Elsewhere, Bolivians are paid $10 to $15 a day for the dangerous work, which can cause gangrene and other infections. The Cochabamba police had avoided such costs by seizing poor boys from the streets. Despite the publicity generated by the two deaths, church sources say the practice continues and that a third youth has since died in similar circumstances. The church-supported

DRAWINGS BY RANDALL ENOS

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Permanent Human Rights Assembly has denounced the Leopards for robbing and mistreating peasants in the coca leaf–growing region of the Chapare, north of Cochabamba and adjacent to the Beni.

The drug picture is not expected to change in the near future, for several reasons. One is that despite promises of U.S. aid for coca leaf eradication programs, Washington is more interested in counterinsurgency than in the drug traffic. Moreover, the few eradication programs attempted have had no impact on total production—growers either move elsewhere or put up strong resistance, as in the Chapare, where D.E.A. agents were run out of one town by angry peasants.

Another reason, government officials admit, is that the economy would collapse without cocaine income. The traffic earns approximately $3 billion a year, or about six times the total value of Bolivia's legal exports. While only about $600 million is reinvested in the country, coca dollars fuel important sectors of the economy, including construction and agriculture. According to a study by a Cochabamba research group, 70,000 farmers and their families depend on coca leaf production to survive. Few get rich: The average plot is less than three acres, and because of a cocaine glut on the international market, annual income has dropped to less than $1,000 per family. Still, that is significantly higher than the average $160 earned yearly by peasants who do not grow coca. "It means that a family can buy a few clothes, medicine and a bit more food," said a nun who works with peasant families near Cochabamba. "Take away that income and the people would face real hardship, even starvation."

Despite repeated promises to Washington, President Víctor Paz Estenssoro's government has no intention of taking that income away, partly because it would cause political and economic havoc but also because the ruling classes, including the military, have grown rich from the traffic. A leftist firebrand in his younger days, Paz Estenssoro was responsible for the nationalization of the country's tin mines and sweeping agrarian reform after Bolivia's 1952 revolution. But he has become more conservative with age. Since his election in 1985, his primary concern has been to ram through an economic austerity program demanded by U.S. and European banks, which hold the bulk of Bolivia's $4.9 billion foreign debt. While the program has caused unprecedented unemployment and near-starvation for many of the country's 7 million people, the richest Bolivians—the drug traffickers—have benefited from Paz Estenssoro's trade policies by laundering large sums of money through the flood of contraband goods entering Bolivia.

Although the 81-year-old President will step down this year following general elections in May, the two principal presidential candidates are not expected to change his laissez-faire policy toward drugs. The traffic first flourished in the 1970s, in fact, under the military regime of Gen. Hugo Banzer, who is the leading contender to replace Paz Estenssoro. Earlier this year, Bolivian television showed film clips of a party given by drug king Roberto Suárez on his ranch in the Beni. Present were two high-ranking members of Banzer's political party, Nationalist Democratic Action. The pair—a retired general and a congressman—denied they were there to discuss politics (Suárez's son Roberto insisted that the meeting had dealt with "scientific matters"). But his father, who is believed to have been the source of the film, spoiled things by announcing that "since the 1985 elections, all the country's politicians have been involved in cocaine."

The second leading presidential contender, Jaime Paz, who heads the Revolutionary Left Movement, has not suffered from such associations. But while his party, which is social democratic in outlook, wants to humanize the government's neoliberal economic policies, Paz's advisers admit he would not substantially change the current approach to drugs. "We would die as a country" if the cocaine traffic stopped, said one. "Consequently, Paz must follow Paz Estenssoro's example—promise Washington anything, sign any law that's meaningless, but do nothing."

Unlike Banzer, who has the support of the armed forces and the wealthy, including the drug traffickers, Paz can expect opposition from the right if elected. And the Bolivian right, which is neofascist and well armed and financed, is not to be taken lightly, as it has shown by staging a string of military coups since the 1960s. As in Colombia, the drug traffickers play an important role in right-wing politics through financial contributions to politicians and the military. The 1980 coup led by Gen. Luís García Meza was financed by the cocaine traffickers and supported by an army of neofascist European mercenaries recruited by former Gestapo chief Klaus Barbie, the infamous "Butcher of Lyons" [see George Black, "Delle Chiaie: From Bologna to Bolivia," *The Nation*, April 25, 1987]. Numerous leftist politicians and labor leaders were assassinated during García Meza's two-year reign of terror, and those who work with unions and other popular organizations say they expect another bout of repression if Banzer is elected. But even if Paz should squeak into office, he cannot afford to antagonize the drug traffickers because of their influence among the military and police.

At the same time, the Bolivian traffickers are unwilling to annoy their Colombian bosses by allowing the government to upset sources of supply. Informed Bolivians say that Colombia's Medellín cartel wields considerable power in their country, where it sets prices for paste and cocaine and polices the drug underworld through the simple expedient of killing. Local traffickers do not have the Colombians' capacity to refine the paste into powder in any but small amounts; nor can they compete with the cartel's near-monopoly on sales to the United States and Europe, even if they were willing to tangle with its paid assassins. "We have large paste producers in Bolivia," said one source, "but nothing more."

Unlike Colombia, where the major traffickers are better known than most politicians, the only widely recognized dealer in Bolivia is Suárez, and he gave up his Beni kingdom last July by meekly surrendering to the police. Why he agreed to go quietly is a mystery, since his ranch is patrolled by a private army. Some attribute his surrender to poor health, but others believe he sought police protection from the Colombian mafia. The lack of information about other

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traffickers is indicative of the government's unwillingness to probe too deeply into an industry on which the fortunes of so many influential people depend. The see-no-evil approach is also useful in fending off U.S. government officials who periodically turn up in La Paz to demand action. If the pressures become too great, the Bolivians can always agree to another round of military maneuvers in the Beni, since such games seem to appease Washington without in any way disturbing the drug traffickers. □

THE BANKRUPTCY REFUGE

How to Reward The Criminals

RUTH SHEREFF

Two and a half billion dollars sounds like a lot of money to most people, but not to the thousands of women and their families who sued the A.H. Robins Company. To many of them, no sum can compensate for the infertility, infection, hysterectomies and death caused by the pharmaceutical firm's Dalkon Shield intrauterine device. Yet, unless a U.S. Court of Appeals rules against that financial settlement in the coming weeks, the paltry payoff will stand—and the U.S. Bankruptcy Code will be one step closer to becoming the shelter of choice for corporate criminals.

Robins is protected by a loophole in the bankruptcy law. Since 1978, when Congress rewrote that law, a company has not been required to prove its insolvency through lengthy legal discovery proceedings when it files for bankruptcy, which Robins did in August 1985. Instead, the mere *possibility* of insolvency became enough to protect corporations from creditors and collection agencies. This key change in Chapter 11 of the code meant that long-term contracts could be canceled and debts and litigation against a firm frozen. Meanwhile, company executives could meet with creditors to work out a payment plan.

An unforeseen result was that profitable companies turned to bankruptcy court to minimize claims against them. One giant company that used this ploy was the Johns-Manville Corporation, which was sued by thousands of workers sickened after exposure to asbestos. Another was Robins; last July its creditors voted to accept a reorganization that includes a $2.47 billion trust fund for the 195,000 women who filed claims of injury by the Dalkon Shield. Despite their continuing fury at the company, 95 percent of the 140,000 plaintiffs who voted said yes to the plan, because it seemed the best deal they were likely to get.

The Dalkon settlement, if the plaintiffs' appeal is turned down, will allow shareholders and executives of the family-controlled company to make off with a hefty profit from the recent sale of Robins to American Home Products. The deal also protects them from future liability claims. In the interim, thousands of seriously injured women, who already have waited years for recompense, may have to sit out several more before they see a dime from the trust. Nor is it at all certain that the fund will provide enough to cover their claims.

Although mass tort cases—claims of injury by large groups of people—have become increasingly common, the phenomenon was not considered when the bankruptcy laws were overhauled in the late 1970s. Instead, Congress focused on keeping troubled companies afloat and protecting commercial creditors such as banks and suppliers. The legislators wanted to help firms avoid liquidation, which rarely provides the cash generated by a functioning enterprise.

The bankruptcy process begins when a company files a court petition claiming it cannot pay its debts. The company then receives protection from its creditors, including those suing it, who must be listed. The court notifies the creditors, who vote on the final reorganization (repayment) plan as proposed by the company and approved by the judge.

In the Robins case, several Dalkon Shield victims won multimillion-dollar punitive damage awards in the months before the company filed for bankruptcy. Lawyers for the plaintiffs showed that company officials knew soon after the shield went on the market in 1971 that the locater string, a cable-like bundle of fibers, sucked bacteria into the uterus and fallopian tubes, causing dangerous infections. But the firm did not stop selling the shield in the United States until 1974 and did not recall it until ten years later, when it offered to pay doctors to remove the device.

At the prebankruptcy trials, Robins took a hard line, casting aspersions on the sex practices of the women who had suffered infections, implying that they were responsible for their own medical problems. When pressed for subpoenaed documents, company executives failed to produce many of them, claiming they were lost. A Robins lawyer eventually confessed that he had ordered documents destroyed. Disgusted by the company's tactics, U.S. District Judge Miles Lord denounced Robins officials at a settlement hearing in 1984. "None of you has faced up to the fact," he said, "that more than 9,000 women have made claims that they gave up part of their womanhood so that your company might prosper. . . . If one poor young man were . . . to inflict such damage upon one woman he would be jailed for a good portion of the rest of his life."

By the time Robins sought refuge under Chapter 11, it faced 5,100 unresolved shield claims. Some 190,000 more were filed when the company notified women through advertising—required by the bankruptcy court—that it needed to know how many potential claims existed. Feminists complain that, despite turning up all these additional victims, the ads were not widely published, and indeed did not appear at all in Third World countries, where Robins continued to sell the shield until 1975.

Sybil Shainwald, who represents hundreds of shield victims, argues that her clients might have received more money through continued civil litigation if the Chapter 11 petition had been denied. For example, women with minor injuries have been offered only $725 by the trust fund. Even

Ruth Shereff is a business reporter who lives in New York City.

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more disturbing to some shield victims is the absence of retribution in bankruptcy proceedings, which fosters cooperation between debtors and creditors for a quick settlement. "This is not a system of justice, this is a business plan," says Karen Hicks, president of the Dalkon Shield Information Network, one of four groups opposed to the settlement. "You should have seen lawyers for the claimants committee patting lawyers from Robins on the back. I want human beings accountable for criminal wrongdoing."

The reorganization plan also protects Robins executives from punitive damages. The purpose of punitive damages is to deter careless and dishonest behavior. Since criminal prosecution of corporate executives is rare, "the only language corporations understand is punitive damages," Shainwald asserts. Another critic, Paul Brodeur, argues that the message of the bankruptcy law is, "If you kill or maim enough people you are going to get out of it, because the system is saying, 'Oh, gosh, you just can't possibly reimburse all those people.'" Brodeur, author of *Outrageous Misconduct*, the definitive book on asbestos poisoning and the Johns-Manville bankruptcy, also objects to the way courts give the same priority to health victims and the claims of other types of creditors. "It is unconscionable," he says, "that people who are disabled, diseased and dying are being treated like the other creditors, like the trucking company."

Robins shareholders and the Robins family, rather than the women injured by the Dalkon Shield, will be the biggest beneficiaries of the bankruptcy. Another change made in the bankruptcy law in 1978 allows judges to estimate and set a limit on unliquidated claims. Those are claims whose value has not been determined, like the ones filed by the shield and asbestos victims. Judge Robert Merhige Jr., who handled the Robins case in bankruptcy court in Richmond, Virginia, placed the $2.47 billion limit on the shield claimants' trust in December 1987, although the victims argued at a hearing before him that between $4 billion and $7 billion was needed.

Once the formerly open-ended liability was capped, Robins became a takeover target because of such cash-generating trademark products as Robitussin cough syrup and ChapStick lip balm. So the shareholders committee appointed by the court to represent the stock held outside the Robins family (approximately 60 percent of it) held what amounted to an auction, with the Rorer Group, American Home Products and France's Sanofi bidding. The winner was American Home Products, producer of the birth control pills Lo-Ovral and Triphasil and of Chef Boyardee canned goods and Jiffy pop popcorn. American Home Products offered to underwrite the trust fund, pay creditors in full and give $700 million in its own stock to Robins shareholders. The stock offer was worth about $29 per Robins share at the takeover—more than three times the $8 per share that it was trading at when the bankruptcy petition was filed. Forty percent of the $700 million will be shared by the Robins family and executives who were in control of the company when it refused to recall the shield. E. Claiborne Robins Sr. and E. Claiborne Robins Jr. each must contribute $5 million to the trust fund in exchange for protection from future lawsuits, leaving them a mere $141 million to split.

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Lawyers for several thousand Dalkon Shield plaintiffs are appealing the settlement. These victims are livid about the ceiling put on the trust, which has allowed shareholders to walk away with a profit. But the judge's $2.47 billion cap is difficult to challenge simply because the limit is legal. Thus, the appeal now pending rests instead on procedural matters. Lawyers for the claimants argue that no range of monetary awards was listed before the reorganization vote, and that the votes were not weighted according to the size of the claims.

In a separate but related settlement, Aetna Life and Casualty Company, Robins's insurer, will also receive immunity from further lawsuits in exchange for a payment of $75 million in cash and $350 million in insurance to the trust fund. Aetna was sued along with Robins in many cases and was accused in a class action suit of colluding in covering up the dangers of the shield. The full extent of Aetna's involvement is not known, because Judge Merhige excluded that subject from discovery proceedings. Shield victims also are challenging the freedom from liability given to Aetna and the Robins family, since neither filed for the protection of bankruptcy law.

In contrast to Robins shareholders, Johns-Manville stockholders and executives lost out in the reorganization plan approved by creditors in 1986. Shareholders had to settle for one-eighth of their stock, in effect turning over the rest to pay commercial creditors and form a $2.5 billion trust fund for asbestos health claims. The fund for victims will control 50 to 80 percent of this stock, depending on various conditions, and eventually the trust may take over the company. Even now one of the lawyers for the asbestos claimants sits on Manville's board. Moreover, if $2.5 billion is not sufficient to cover the claims against Manville, 20 percent of the company's profits will be paid into the fund indefinitely.

However successful the Manville experience, there remain no guidelines for dealing with mass tort claims in bankruptcy court. Thus, the Robins reorganization, where shareholders came in first when they normally get paid last, could provide the cruel model for future cases. Trial lawyers and consumer advocates complain about this misuse of bankruptcy protection, but no one is mobilizing to change the law. Indeed, most trial lawyers are pushing a solution that is unworkable: allowing personal injury suits to proceed even as the filings mount into the thousands. This may benefit the first claimants off the mark, but the last victims to discover their injuries may be left with nothing if the company fails due to massive litigation.

Bankruptcy court does have something to offer plaintiffs in these mass tort cases, but the code must be modified to give sick and dying victims top priority. First, the plaintiffs' discovery proceedings into corporate activity should continue, even if personal injury trials are frozen, so that victims receive a full accounting and corporate criminals are exposed. Second, companies should have to prove that they really face insolvency to keep them from unfairly ducking out of multimillion-dollar punitive damage awards. Third, punitive damages should be a part of any reorganization, if the money is available. Finally, the Manville model of

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running a bankrupt company for the benefit of present and future health claimants should be written into any amended Bankruptcy Code. □

THE ANTI-AFRICAN PROTESTS

More Than Just Chinese Racism

RAYMOND SEIDELMAN

Large racial demonstrations in China, like those that took place in Nanjing recently, seem inconceivable. Anyone who has spent a year there—as I did, teaching American politics—would not expect such events to happen in that remote city, much less make world headlines. When you're there, you get the sense of being isolated from the rest of the planet; printed news and mail from abroad arrive a week late, and the BBC and Voice of America broadcasts are filled with static and beeps.

So, in a way, was U.S. news coverage of the demonstrations. Much of it came from Beijing, hundreds of miles from the angry clashes in Nanjing, and left many gaps. To try to fill them in, I called several old friends at the Johns Hopkins University–Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies and asked many questions. Their answers may be surprising to those who remember the old China under Chairman Mao. My friends argued that official accounts dismissing the demonstrations as "isolated incidents" were incorrect. Nor were the protests purely or only a manifestation of virulent racism, even though this is undeniably widespread in the People's Republic.

The demonstrations had other roots. The 140 African students at Nanjing universities—vestiges of the old revolutionary commitments of Chinese foreign policy—were a convenient, if misplaced, scapegoat for the great strains and frustrations that have accompanied economic reform and modernization throughout the country, including Nanjing. Nine years ago the Chinese Communist regime introduced free market reforms that have produced the new affluence so evident to Chinese and foreign visitors. But in Nanjing and elsewhere the reforms have also swelled the urban underclass of unemployed and underemployed young people. While Chinese television and the press are full of success stories that would make Horatio Alger blush, there are many who have been left out in the cold by reforms that make it harder to get and keep a job, receive a decent education or assume a respectable place in Chinese society.

It was those Chinese who had lost the most, my friends reported, who assembled outside the Hopkins-Nanjing Center the night after Christmas, demanding to know if the center was "sheltering Africans." And the same groups of discontented young people surrounded the Nanjing train station after the African students took refuge there. Youthful protesters also formed the majority of those milling around Gulou Square singing, of all things, the "Internationale" and chanting for vengeance on African students for the alleged violence committed at a party at nearby Hehai University. The demonstrators resented the privileges supposedly accorded African students but not Chinese citizens.

The real target, however, was the Chinese government and the new economic order it has brought about. If capitalism is now a good word in China, democracy is not. In its absence, the safest way to embarrass the government is to avoid direct confrontations with the party and state and instead target those who are most dependent on the government for protection and special privileges. Chinese society is divided into those who enjoy such privileges and those who don't. Those who do are the new stratum of entrepreneurs and the old stratum of party officialdom. They have things like motor scooters, cars, foreign-made color televisions and the freedom to travel abroad, thanks to access to foreigners or to hard currency.

While the Nanjing demonstrators were almost all young, they were a varied lot, apparent in the different emphases of what they shouted. The most prominent group was of university students—those most likely to sing the "Internationale" and downplay the narrowly racist elements of the demonstration. College students in China may seem like a small elite, but the majority face low-paid state-sector jobs, tiny stipends, poor facilities and vast restrictions on intellectual and political expression. They want African students to be treated "as badly as they are," or to be treated as well materially as the Africans are.

Raymond Seidelman teaches political science at Sarah Lawrence College. In 1987-88, he taught at the Johns Hopkins University–Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies.

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The most unalloyed racism in Nanjing's streets was expressed by those young people the government likes to say are "waiting for employment." In conventional American parlance this would be China's new underclass; in Marxist terms it is the lumpenproletariat. Those waiting for employment can often be seen outside Chinese train stations or in public squares, smoking, talking and sometimes making wisecracks at foreigners. Their growing numbers reflect the negative side of the economic reform process: The mechanization of agriculture has put increasing pressure on the cities and on China's traditional family structure. Education may be less regimented, but it is also less available in many areas. Social services of all kinds are tied to employment: If you're unemployed, you're protected neither by the old socialist system nor by the new capitalist one.

In Nanjing, those waiting for employment can often be found hanging around at Xingjiekou, site of the city's major hotel, the Jinling. Inside, foreigners and those few Chinese who have access to foreign exchange can eat, sleep and play in air-conditioned (or, in winter, heated) rooms and restaurants. I used to pedal my bike through Nanjing's crowded streets to get to the Jinling's weight room. The hotel's guard would never question me, or any foreigner. But the young Chinese who tried to follow me through the gate were screamed at and stopped. One doesn't have to be a sociologist to explain the bitterness and anger on those young men's faces. Six months later, it comes as no surprise that the Jinling loiterers should single out the African students as objects of their hatred. While white foreigners may receive grudging respect, because they come from countries whose technological achievements and wealth are now admired by many Chinese, Africans do not. Besides, there is the implicit assumption that crimes against whites would be punished much more harshly than crimes against Africans, who are at the bottom of the "special privileges" totem pole in China.

During my year at Nanjing, I met five or six of the Africans attending Hehai and got some sense of what life was like for them. One Sudanese graduate student in chemistry was bitter about his fate. He had been sent to China for five years by his government and couldn't even afford to return home to visit his family and friends. He had no money to travel in China, either, but he really didn't want to because he was afraid. Fluent in Chinese, he was tired of the constant taunts and comments about his "funny hair" and "big nose." He stuck pretty much to his dormitory and his classes. Students and teachers treated him politely, he said, but in three years he had never been invited to anyone's home or been out of Nanjing. Nor had he had a single date; it was "too much trouble."

The Chinese government is now probably hoping that things will calm down with the onset of the Lunar New Year, when students go on vacation. But the problems will not go away. The anti-African demonstrations are only a metaphor for a new kind of shadow political struggle among the Chinese themselves. If the unemployment and inflation now so rampant in China continue unabated, and if opportunities for political reforms remain closed off, the social climate that breeds political pathologies like racism will also grow. □

Obsession

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

the other images of San Francisco kept importuning. I described what I'd seen in their hometown and recalled the gay youth agency I knew best, New York City's Hetrick-Martin Institute, its dreary facilities, small staff and paltry budget. "Shouldn't we start worrying again about all those issues we've forgotten in the epidemic? Gay kids?" I ventured—as though we'd ever really cared. "Even if they don't get AIDS, what are we giving them to *live* for?"

The guests fell silent. Across from me sat an elder of the city's gay community, a man of money and influence. He stared at me in utter disbelief, his face suspended above the pork roast. "How *can* we?" he rasped. "We're *dying*!"

There's an oily sentiment among gay men and lesbians these days that—amid the din of a culture that keeps us in our place—we've matured; that we've grown aggressive in defense of our lives since fate, with some harsh wisdom, sent us AIDS. We produce abundant evidence of sacrifice to prove the claim: For most of this decade we've frantically been building AIDS organizations, draining our pockets poor with AIDS donations, exhausting our strength as AIDS volunteers, doing battle with AIDS bigots, creating mayhem in the streets, nurturing, mourning, worrying about infection till we're sick, dying with a desperate hold on dignity. We've been full of AIDS—gay men, lesbians, our parents, our newly sympathetic heterosexual friends. We've all had heart, in fact, for nothing else.

Even lesbians, none of whom, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (C.D.C.), have contracted AIDS making love to a woman, have taken to keening that the whole gay community is dying—so compulsive is the human need to partake in the drama of catastrophe. And this panicky faith that all of us are doomed cries down the sobering truth that it is only a minority of homosexuals who've been stricken or ever will be, leaving the rest of us to confront not so much the grief of dying as the bitterness, in an oppressive world, of staying alive.

No one has influenced (or parroted) the gay community's views on AIDS more than Larry Kramer and his organizational offspring, New York's AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP)—chic street protesters with clones, albeit autonomous ones, in nearly every major city. The numbers they use to pronounce universal death on the gay communi-

Darrell Yates Rist is co-founder of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and writer in residence at the Center for American Culture Studies, Columbia University. *His book,* Heartlands: A Gay Man's Odyssey Across America, *will be published next year by E.P. Dutton. He wishes especially to thank Gregory Kolovakos for his contributions to this article.* The Nation *will be publishing a series of commentaries on this article in the weeks ahead.*

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ty's men are immoral because they are panic-mongering, insidious because they are specious. They fall within some extreme theoretical realm of possibility, and therefore prey on the frightened; they willfully propagate the worst that medical science can imagine, regardless of the improbability, regardless of maddening contradictions in epidemiologic definitions and data.

Neither Kramer nor anyone else has any hard national figures on the prevalence of infection with HIV, the virus assumed to cause AIDS. But most activists, and the media, seem to have swallowed the C.D.C.'s estimate of 1 million to 1.5 million men, women and children. These numbers, unchanged since 1986 despite the luridly publicized "spread" of HIV, ludicrously derive not from national seroprevalence surveys but in great part from mythical assumptions about the population size and sexual practices of gay men. Nevertheless, both Kramer's crowd and the media continue to broadcast the notion that HIV infection is uniformly fatal, even though the C.D.C.'s own Kung Jong Lui and William Darrow, on whose research the morbid dogma is based, have disavowed such sweeping prognoses as egregious misapplications of their work. Their San Francisco study, published in the June 3, 1988, issue of *Science*, suggested only that, among a small and very high-risk group of HIV antibody-positive men, there was a 90 percent probability that between 39 percent and 100 percent would develop AIDS—a crap shoot in statistics, one never intended to be a prediction.

More hopeful yet, the New York Blood Center's head epidemiologist, Dr. Cladd Stevens, has found that 20 to 25 percent of the HIV antibody-positive men she studied for ten years show no measurable immune dysfunction. Yet an article in *The Washington Post* on HIV infection, "AIDS Virus Likely Fatal to All Infected," chose, like most media reports, to misinterpret hysterically Lui and Darrow's study. And it is such terrifyingly irresponsible misanalyses of the San Francisco numbers that Kramer and his disciples embrace. Members of ACT UP have even passed out copies of the *Post* article in the streets, like biblical tracts.

According to the Kinsey statistics—old, but the most reliable figures we have—American men whose homosexuality is "more than incidental" make up 13 to 38 percent of the male population. Today, that's between 11.2 million and 32.8 million men. For the sake of argument, let's accept the C.D.C.'s top figure of 1.5 million people who would test positive for HIV in the United States. Let's even assume that *all* of them are homosexuals—ignoring the hundreds of thousands who are heterosexual intravenous drug users, hemophiliacs, heterosexually infected women, infected babies. Even if all 1.5 million died off in a biologically improbable holocaust, a minimum of 9.7 million homosexually active men and 5.6 million lesbians (from Kinsey's minimum incidence of 6 percent homosexuality among women) would remain uninfected and sentenced to life.

Data on the homosexual population and AIDS will change in time and yield more truth—or less. But no imprecision in the numbers has sobered the gay apocalyptics for a moment. And their fantasy of wholesale mortality gives us yet a new excuse to desert the business of living and ignore the most vulnerable among us. Certainly when it comes to kids, even the homosexual heart for AIDS beats false; it beats only for men of a certain age, a certain color—in fact, a certain social class.

Since its founding in 1981, New York's pre-eminent AIDS service organization, the Gay Men's Health Crisis (G.M.H.C.), with an annual budget of almost $11 million—and $1 million more in material donations for new office furnishings last year—has never funded outreach of any kind to gay and lesbian youth. I've been told again and again the organization is fearful of being accused of proselytizing, that most vicious imputation afflicting homosexuals. So children die while we dance to the songs of bigots. The Hetrick-Martin Institute makes its services available to the 150,000 gay and lesbian adolescents that it estimates live in New York City. This group does provide AIDS outreach, but also administers a high school for homosexual kids harassed out of public schools, educates parents and teachers, runs support groups, conducts counseling, fur-

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nishes food, clothing and access to shelter to the adolescent homeless—almost all of whom are black or Latino. The institute had a staff last fiscal year of only twenty-four (including street counselors) and a mere $755,000 budget, most of which came from the city and state. Only 18 percent of the money came from the generosity of homosexual men and women and their friends, whereas nearly three-quarters of G.M.H.C.'s budget currently comes from private donations and interest on the investment of excess income.

But even concerns more immediate than gay children fail to engage our self-interest. The battle against anti-gay violence languishes while assaults have soared specifically as a backlash to the disease. According to the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project (A.V.P.), in the city alone there were 609 reported queer-bashings last year, reflecting a more than 300 percent increase since 1984, when AIDS stories began to saturate the media. Moreover, the A.V.P. reports that 90 percent of anti-gay and -lesbian crimes nationwide are never reported: Victims are afraid of being forced from the closet and demeaned by the police or made to face, in many states, the legally sanctioned discrimination of sodomy laws. Despite New York's huge gay and lesbian population at risk of assault, the A.V.P. could muster a budget last year of a mere $150,000, just $10,000 of which was donated by the community.

The epidemic of violence has been long, brutal and often fatal. David Wertheimer, director of A.V.P., describes the hatred vented in anti-gay attacks as "unimaginable." Speaking about a series of murders in New York's Chelsea neighborhood that began in 1985, he said, "The victim is commonly found stabbed twenty or thirty times, sometimes with his castrated penis stuffed in his mouth." Yet there has not been a sustained outcry from the gay community against this violence.

Why are we so callous about these attacks? Can no threat but AIDS ignite our indignation? Why do we care so little, in fact, even for the sanctity of our relationships? Why is there no ACT UP specifically to protest laws forbidding same-sex marriage, banned in every state? Why no marathon protests at marriage license bureaus, no sit-ins at state legislatures, no class action suits? Why doesn't such brutality against our love incite our anger? Are we such demoralized creatures that only the threat of extinction can stir our collective will? When a car wreck left Sharon Kowalski a quadraplegic, her homophobic father had her quarantined by a court from Karen Thompson, her lover. Is the murder of their relationship at the hands of American law less of a horror than losing one's lover to a virus?

For the first time since the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s, one crucial organization, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, has begun to put AIDS in sane perspective. "We can't go on just living *through* AIDS," the task force's Urvashi Vaid has said. "We have to think in terms of living *beyond* it if this movement's going to survive." The organization has contained its AIDS expenditures at 15 percent of its total program budget and reinforced its primary work of gay liberation. Yet the task force has a staff of only ten, and some 400 occasional volunteers nationally. New York's G.M.H.C. has a staff of

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105, plus 1,900 volunteers. The task force's 1988 budget was a humiliating $860,000—more than $10 million less than the budget of the G.M.H.C. This grotesque disparity is compounded over and over across the nation.

Even otherwise deeply closeted gay men and lesbians are avid in their testimonials about the need to wage war against the disease. But too many of these AIDS crusaders never go public over the right of homosexuals to something more than not dying. In my gym, a crossroads of Manhattan, a coterie of cultish gay men plastered ACT UP's "Silence = Death" logo everywhere in the facility and are given to working out in ACT UP or G.M.H.C. T-shirts—as though sporting such gym wear were a courageous act. But I've not seen one of that crowd so boldly advertise a more identifiably gay and therefore riskier issue. A certain interest in AIDS has become the trendy code for suggesting one's homosexuality without declaring it, what being a bachelor and an artiste used to suggest.

The ruse that comforts us is that the fight against AIDS and the struggle for gay rights are the same. Last year, a gay Chicago newspaper headlined, "Riverside [California] Supports Gay Rights." The story below read: "The Riverside City Council unanimously approved an ordinance that bans discrimination against people with AIDS." It's in this very sort of thing that we're deceived. What good do those laws do for most lesbians, who certainly are not suffering from AIDS? Or for the average homosexual or bisexual man, who, whatever our hysteria, would not test positive for HIV either? Or for those who have been exposed to the virus but are asymptomatic, not all of whom will sicken and die, however fantastic the latest rumors? What's the benefit of such legislation to gay men with AIDS themselves if the excuse to abuse their rights isn't AIDS but homosexuality? Any benefit that gay men and lesbians get from the legislated rights of people with AIDS is second-handed grace: You have to claim to be dying to receive it.

But our failure is far more iniquitous than mere dereliction. For, though the constituencies of gay rights and AIDS activism may overlap, the politics—as conceived—are often violently incompatible. At the October 1987 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, an uncommon show of militant self-respect among homosexuals, at least a half-million of us paraded not just against AIDS but for all the rights and privileges that heterosexuals enjoy. Yet, even as we rallied, I sat in a meeting of national AIDS activists who fretted over the possibility that the event would become a political embarrassment for AIDS lobbyists. The symbolic public same-sex wedding the Saturday before the march, a demonstration for spousal rights, was a particular sore point. The director of a powerful national AIDS umbrella organization especially complained that when the wedding hit the news a disgusted Congress would renege on AIDS funding. She and her colleagues still hoped desperately that last-minute maneuvers would kill the thing—treachery bartering away gay liberation.

Some angry lesbians question whether bourgeois gay men ever wanted more than comfortably closeted sex anyway—and now wonder if they want more than a quick cure for AIDS in order to get back to the old days. Some ask more bitterly yet whether men, who demand center stage for AIDS, would sacrifice a pittance of their politics or pleasures if lesbians were the ones dying. Yet, there always have been gay men who've wanted more than sex and obsequious privacy, whose cause has been politically radical and impolite. They've been largely shouted down by the politics of this epidemic. And the more the AIDS movement divorces itself from the demands of gay rights, the more it becomes a route to respect for homosexuals not open to unapologetic gay activists. AIDS is the cause célèbre, and, insidiously, we are drawn in, chumming with the Liz Taylors and even the William F. Buckley Jrs. (who've contributed charitably to the fight against AIDS, though Bill has called for tattooing infected gay men's asses). Gossip columnists bold-face AIDS activists' names among mentions of the socially registered. New York's artsy Bessie Committee even gave ACT UP a performance citation last year for its street protests, unlikely applause for genuine revolutionaries.

But even homophobes who'd never want to see a homosexual holding a lover's hand, especially in front of the children, can cry (and contribute) at the thought of so many gay men dying. They're with us on AIDS: Dying and preoccupied with dying, we're less of a threat, our radical potential diverted to mere survival. Through a marriage with disease we've arrived. But to live with our apostasy we've also had to hide from the damning truth that our patrons in the fight against AIDS are seldom dear friends when we're not being sick, just homosexual.

It isn't a virus that for centuries has deprived us gay men and lesbians of our freedom, nor is it this epidemic that now most destroys our lives. Nor is it bigotry. It's our own shame, a morbid failure of self-respect and sane, self-righteous anger. If we care about nothing but AIDS now, it is because identifying with sexually transmitted death plays to some dark belief that we deserve it.

In the midst of death, we are confronted with a choice of life that so far we've only dallied with, the terrible responsibility of living free. For wholeness demands more than arguing with bigots, more than crying for acceptance, more than fighting against disease. It asks that we abandon selfishness, self-pity and every compromise of our self-worth. It insists that we nurture the dying, more selflessly than we ever have, but care as much for the promise of life. It compels us to understand that silence equals death not only in the middle of an epidemic, but that it always has killed us and will continue its genocide when AIDS is gone. And wholeness forces us to forsake AIDS as our dark obsession, as the sum of our lives. For this disease is at least as fatal to our hearts as to our blood. Our devotion to it will kill us more surely than a virus ever could. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Mississippi Burning

NICOLAUS MILLS

WE ARE NOT AFRAID: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi. *By Seth Cagin and Philip Dray. Macmillan. 500 pp. $22.50.*

FREEDOM SUMMER. *By Doug McAdam. Oxford University Press. 333 pp. $24.95.*

When we think of the civil rights movement of the early 1960s, the violent scenes are the ones that most often come to mind. The movement was our national morality play. The heroes were, with a few exceptions, sure to be black and in danger. The villains were sure to be white and in power. The Mississippi Summer Project of 1964 was designed to change this scenario. The villains would still be the good old boys who belonged to the Klan and the bankers and businessmen who belonged to the White Citizens Council. But this time there would be a new set of white heroes joining the cast.

The idea behind the Summer Project was startlingly simple. A task force numbering no more than a thousand volunteers—most of them Northern college students—would come to Mississippi for the summer. Under the direction of a civil rights coalition led by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the volunteers would work on voter registration, start Freedom Schools and help build a political party, the Mississippi Freedom Democrats, open to all races. The Summer Project would show, its organizers believed, that the segregationist laws, which kept more than 90 percent of Mississippi's blacks from voting, could be overcome. "When you come South, you bring with you the concern of the country—because the people of the country don't identify with Negroes," Bob Moses, the Harlem-born, Harvard-educated director of the Summer Project would tell the volunteers.

The Summer Project did not succeed in getting many new black voters on the rolls. Nor could its organizers force the Democratic National Convention of 1964 to give the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party the kind of recognition it wanted. Even more important, the Summer Project paid a heavy toll for the challenge it mounted: On June 21 three civil rights workers—New Yorkers Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman and Mississippi-born James Chaney—were murdered, and before the summer was out, thirty-seven black churches would be burned to the ground, eighty volunteers beaten and scores arrested.

But despite these setbacks, the Summer Project turned out to be a high-water mark in the civil rights movement. At its start 65 percent of the country opposed the project, believing it was too dangerous. By August it was Mississippi officials, not the Summer Project's organizers, who were on the defensive. Never again would a Mississippi senator like James Eastland have credibility when he said of his state's black population, "They're doing all right. They're happy and they're prosperous." Television coverage had given the nation too close a look at the violence in Mississippi. When the Selma, Alabama, crisis began, the country knew enough to look at the South very differently than it had in 1964. By the following summer the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was law, and the number of registered black voters in Mississippi began to climb immediately. By 1966 32.9 percent of eligible blacks were registered, and by the early 1970s that figure was up to 62.2 percent.

Over the past twenty-five years, however, our memory of the Summer Project has become shadowy. The civil war within the movement that surfaced during the project and came to a head two years later with the expulsion of whites from SNCC has come to dominate the public perception of black-white relations during those years. We recall Stokely Carmichael shouting "Black Power" rather than Bob Moses quietly telling a group of departing Summer Project volunteers, "If we can go and come back alive, then that is something."

Now, thanks to a controversial new film, Alan Parker's *Mississippi Burning*, all that has changed. The Summer Project—in particular the events surrounding the murders of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman—is news again. It is a shame so much time had to pass for this to happen, but in literary terms the timing of *Mississippi Burning* could not be better. It coincides with the publication of two important books on the summer of 1964, Seth Cagin and Philip Dray's *We Are Not Afraid* and Doug McAdam's *Freedom Summer.*

The focus of *We Are Not Afraid* is the murders of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman. Cagin and Dray offer no new interpretive framework for the events they describe, but they provide what has long been needed, a narrative history of the summer of 1964 that captures its drama and the ethical challenge it presented the nation. To tell their story Cagin and Dray have gone over the letters and notebooks of Summer Project participants, conducted interviews and, under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, made extensive use of the F.B.I.'s MIBURN (the code name for Mississippi Burning) file. The result is a book so novel-like in its evocation of events that one seldom stops to think how painstakingly Cagin and Dray must have worked to create such a seamless tale.

We Are Not Afraid begins on Sunday, June 21, with the murders of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman. We see the three men set out to visit the ruins of the Mount Zion Methodist Church, which had been burned to the ground the week before by Klansmen. We see them, despite the flat tire on their car, get arrested for speeding by the deputy sheriff of Neshoba County. We watch them eat a home-cooked Sunday supper, carefully prepared by the jail cook, and we see their last chance for freedom disappear when a civil rights worker calling on their behalf is told that the three are not there.

From this opening scene, *We Are Not Afraid* moves on to a series of profiles of the three civil rights workers. But the profiles are never offered in isolation. In 1964 what Aaron Henry, head of the Mississippi National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, would call "the thundering silence of the good people" was ending for the generation represented by Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman. Cagin and Dray show how the three men embodied this change in consciousness. Equally important, Cagin and Dray offer us a parallel portrait of the Mississippi Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman were trying to change. "Flat, endless Delta land of cotton, straight

Nicolaus Mills teaches at Sarah Lawrence College and is completing a book on the Mississippi Summer Project.

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two-laned road, monotony, with only an occasional miserable shack to interrupt a landscape that was a visual forever," volunteer Sally Belfrage would write in a memoir also called *Freedom Summer*. Cagin and Dray capture brilliantly the terror shaping this world. We see why Florence Mars, one of the few white Mississippians willing to challenge the racism of her state, would say of her neighbors' response to the murders of the three men, "It has made me understand how Nazi Germany was possible."

By the time we get to the final chapters of *We Are Not Afraid*, where Cagin and Dray describe the forty-four days between the disappearance of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman and the discovery of their bodies in an earthen dam (the F.B.I. recovered the bodies by offering a $30,000 reward, not, as *Mississippi Burning* suggests, by tough detective work), nothing seems more appropriate than the press statement by Andrew Goodman's parents: "Our grief, though personal, belongs to the nation. This tragedy is not private." Cagin and Dray's account of the trial, which three years later sentenced eight of the twenty-one men linked to the murders to jail, is brief but a perfect coda to their story. The trial does not reveal a penitent Mississippi, but it does reveal a Mississippi in which the Justice Department could at last win a conviction for a racial crime.

Like *We Are Not Afraid*, Doug McAdam's *Freedom Summer* is concerned with describing the Summer Project in terms of individual lives. But in contrast to Cagin and Dray, McAdam's focus is the corps of volunteers who came South. McAdam begins his account with a collective portrait of who was drawn to Mississippi. We find that the volunteers came from families that were almost 50 percent wealthier than the national average; that they were slightly older, 23.2 years, than the typical college student; and that idealism rather than radicalism dominated their thinking. The impact of John F. Kennedy was a tremendous influence on them. So too was the idea that in going South they were defending basic American values. As one volunteer put it, "The time for empathy without action is long past."

McAdam follows the volunteers through their orientation at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio, then tracks them through the summer that SNCC field secretary Cleveland Sellers would call "the longest nightmare I have ever had." We see the volunteers' fears build as Mississippi becomes a reality for them, and then we see them, like soldiers, settle into doing their work despite the threat of death. By the end of the Summer Project, most of them have come to believe, as one wrote, "There is a certainty, when you are working in Mississippi, that it is important for you to be alive and to be alive doing just what you are doing."

The heart of *Freedom Summer* is, however, McAdam's account of what happened to the volunteers after the Summer Project ended. We have, McAdam argues, been seduced by the media into seeing the activists of the 1960s as men and women who rebelled in their youth and then turned around and became yuppies. McAdam's great contribution is to show that no such generational selling-out occurred. Radicals like Jerry Rubin, who gave up politics for Wall Street, were the exception among the Summer Project volunteers.

When the summer ended, the volunteers were left in a terrible position. Increasingly, the SNCC field secretaries who had asked them to come to Mississippi were anxious to have them leave. They wanted to reclaim the civil rights movement in Mississippi for themselves, and in the wake of the Democratic National Convention, they saw all white liberals as an obstacle to their progress. But for the volunteers, going back North did not feel like returning to safety. It felt like exile. The summer had put them at the center of events, after which attending football games or worrying about their careers seemed trivial. The volunteers felt alienated from the comfort of their middle-class lives and their friends who had stayed behind. "I feel almost ashamed of my college diploma," one graduate student would write. "When I reflect on the terrors and deprivations of daily lives here, I cannot return to the relative comforts and security of student life."

For many of the volunteers, returning home meant going through a period of depression. But when the depression ended, renewed political activism followed. In the 1960s the influence of these volunteers could be seen in the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, the women's liberation movement and in the antiwar movement, where their organizational skills and willingness to risk jail for their beliefs thrust them into leadership roles. Most important, when the 1960s ended, the volunteers' social commitments did not. Today, fewer than 10 percent of the Summer Project volunteers hold jobs in

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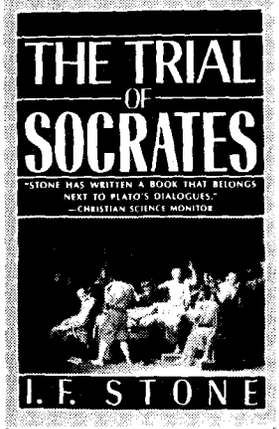
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the business world, while nearly half of them remain active in at least one social movement (the average for men and women of their age and education is 6 percent). As McAdam puts it, the volunteers have remained idealists in a cynical age, unrepentant leftists in an era dominated by the right. If their influence has diminished, their integrity has not.

Will *We Are Not Afraid* and *Freedom Summer* spark further interest in the Summer Project? Or will interest wane once the controversy over *Mississippi Burning* dies down? It is too early to know. What is not too early to know, however, is that we need more, not less, writing on the Summer Project. Clayborne Carson's superb history of SNCC, *In Struggle*, notwithstanding, we still don't know enough about the black organizers who made the Summer Project possible. Bob Moses, the person most responsible, remains a remote figure for most Americans, and there is next to nothing written about the real heroes of the Summer Project, the black families of Mississippi, who risked their jobs and lives to house the volunteers.

The debate about *Mississippi Burning* suggests that at long last we as a nation are prepared to see the civil rights revolution that the summer of 1964 brought to a head as an American revolution, "our" revolution. The danger is that in seeing that summer in these terms we will insist on filtering it back to ourselves as a primarily white experience rather than a moment in history when blacks led the way for blacks and whites to complete our Second Reconstruction. □

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Debating de Man

JON WIENER

RESPONSES: On Paul de Man's Wartime Journalism. *Edited by Werner Hamacher, Neil Hertz and Thomas Keenan. University of Nebraska Press. 477 pp. $40. Paper $19.95.*

This eagerly anticipated volume contains thirty-five essays by defenders and critics of the late Paul de Man, the Yale University literary theorist and practitioner of deconstruction who, after his death, was found to have written for a collaborationist newspaper in occupied Belgium. He wrote 170 articles for the Brussels newspaper *Le Soir* at a time when, in the words of its current editors, it "was stolen and controlled by the occupiers." De Man wrote a weekly literary column that contained, among other things, praise for leading collaborators; in at least one article he adopted an explicitly anti-Semitic position. That article addressed the issue of whether Jews had "polluted" modern literature, and concluded, "A solution to the Jewish problem that would aim at creation of a Jewish colony isolated from Europe would not result, for the literary life of the West, in deplorable consequences." (This article and the rest of de Man's collaborationist writings appear in a separate volume: *Wartime Journalism, 1939–1943*, also edited by Werner Hamacher, Neil Hertz and Thomas Keenan, and published by the University of Nebraska Press.)

The contributors to *Responses: On Paul de Man's Wartime Journalism* fall into two groups: the textualists, who limit themselves to close readings of de Man's articles, and typically find ambiguities and arguments that they interpret as resisting the Nazis; and the historicists, who place de Man's work in its political context and conclude that his collaboration was deeper and more extensive than it initially appeared.

De Man's defenders could have limited themselves to a straightforward acknowledgment that his collaborationist articles were bad, but things could have been worse: He did not fight for the Nazis, few of his articles were explicitly anti-Semitic, and he stopped writing for the collaborationist press at the end of 1942 and never again expressed anything like a pro-Nazi sentiment. They could have argued that, since de Man's mature works are immensely valuable and significant, they outweigh the unacceptable things he did during the war. Unfortunately, virtually all the defenders go considerably beyond this line of reasoning.

The longest and most spectacular defense of de Man comes from Jacques Derrida, the French literary theorist whose name is synonymous with deconstruction. Derrida devotes his most energetic interpretive efforts to de Man's anti-Semitic article "The Jews in Contemporary Literature," which begins with a critical remark about "vulgar anti-Semitism." Derrida declares that "to condemn 'vulgar anti-Semitism,' *especially if one makes no mention of the other kind*, is to condemn anti-Semitism itself." [Emphasis in original.] Other de Man defenders, including J. Hillis Miller of the University of California, Irvine, offer similar textualist interpretations of de Man's reference to "vulgar anti-Semitism."

The historicist interpretation of this phrase is presented by Alice Yaeger Kaplan of Duke University. De Man's rejection of "vulgar anti-Semitism," she argues, was part of the "micro-polemics among anti-Semites, polemics that divide anti-Semitic texts along class lines or 'taste' lines." *Le Soir*'s Léon van Huffel argued against what he called "social" anti-Semitism; the French anti-Semitic writer Brasillach argued against what he called "irrational" anti-Semitism, as exemplified by Céline. De Man's contribu-

Jon Wiener, a contributing editor to The Nation, *teaches history at the University of California, Irvine.*

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tion to this debate, Kaplan says, was the argument that Jews haven't ruined Western literature "simply because they are mediocre. . . . [and] with the Jews gone, nothing will be lost."

For Peggy Kamuf of the University of Southern California, the heart of "The Jews in Contemporary Literature" is not the reference to "vulgar anti-Semitism" but rather de Man's phrase "a solution to the Jewish problem." "The seeming equanimity with which this possibility is envisioned . . . cannot be excused," she writes, because de Man's phrase contains "a terrible omen of the equanimity with which most of Europe's population would witness the racial 'purification' of the land." Although Kamuf is Derrida's translator, here she reads de Man's article by referring to its historical context—providing a good example of a historicist rather than a textualist reading.

John Brenkman of Northwestern University presents the strongest example of the historicist position. De Man, he argues, was "a fascist and an anti-Semite as well as an active collaborator with the Nazi occupation of Belgium." De Man did not confine himself to literary topics, as his defenders argue; instead he supported political initiatives of the Nazi occupation. For example, in an August 1941 review, de Man criticized those "who remain blinded by nationalist passions." Those who confine themselves to textual analysis might interpret that as a subtle criticism of German nationalism. In fact, Brenkman shows, it had the opposite meaning: The occupation government had recently condemned anti-German demonstrations after crowds in Brussels had jeered German officers and soldiers, and townspeople wearing the Belgian national colors on their lapels had attacked members of the Flemish collaborationist "black brigades." De Man, in criticizing Belgians for their "nationalist passions," was using his literary column to criticize acts of protest and resistance.

Although the textualists emphasize their commitment to close reading, most of them somehow missed de Man's other anti-Semitic articles. Richard Klein, for instance, writes that "The Jews in Contemporary Literature" is "the only one, among hundreds, that is devoted to the Jewish question and that reiterates Nazi 'conceptions.'" That's wrong, according to S. Heidi Kruger of the New School for Social Research, who describes a de Man piece called "A View of Contemporary German Fiction," which appeared in *Het Vlaamsche Land* late in August 1942. That periodical was, according to Els de Bens of the University of Ghent, "the unofficial spokesman of Devlag," a group "backed by the SS" that "repeatedly took part in Gestapo raids against Jews and resistance fighters." In that essay de Man "promotes the new 'cleansed' version of German literary history," which excluded the work of expressionists, who were "mainly non-Germans, and in specific Jews."

Kruger emphasizes the context in which each essay was written: "The Jews in Contemporary Literature" appeared in March 1941, when "a solution to the Jewish problem," as de Man called it, remained only a subject of discussion; by the time "A View of Contemporary German Fiction" appeared, neighborhoods of Jews in de Man's city had been rounded up and deported to Auschwitz in a most visible way. Kruger emphasizes that the August 1942 article, far from rejecting "vulgar anti-Semitism," represents "capitulation" to Nazi ideology on the question of the Jews. Derrida did not submit this article of de Man's to textualist analysis: He ignored it.

The challenge to the textualists included a critique of the editors' letter soliciting articles for this volume. Stanley Corngold of Princeton University begins his essay by challenging the editors' characterization of de Man's articles as "texts . . . [that] at times take up the themes and idioms of the discourse promulgated during the Occupation by the Nazis." Texts, Corngold writes, do not by themselves "take up . . . themes and idioms." These texts "were written by an actual person, Paul de Man, and flow from a moral choice."

Throughout de Man's life as an academic in America, he concealed and repeatedly lied about his collaborationist past. Should de Man have told the truth? Telling the truth, Derrida argues, would have been a "ridiculous" gesture for de Man. Moreover, telling the truth "would have deprived us of a part of his work" because "it would have taken his time and energy." Thus de Man "did the right thing" when he hid his past. Derrida concludes that what de Man did—collaborate with the Nazi occupiers of Belgium—should be understood and forgiven, but what de Man's critics have done—commit what he calls "reading mistakes"—should be condemned as unforgivable. "To judge, to condemn the work or the man," Derrida writes, "is to reproduce the exterminating gesture against which one accuses de Man of not

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having armed himself sooner." Derrida here draws a rhetorical connection between criticism of de Man and extermination of the Jews.

Several of the articles in this volume defend de Man by attacking those who have written about his collaborationist articles, especially journalists and "journalist professors." Thus Samuel Weber of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, criticizes Walter Kendrick for his article in the *Voice Literary Supplement*, J. Hillis Miller criticizes my article in *The Nation* and Andrzej Warminski of Northwestern University describes the articles on de Man in *The Nation* and *Newsweek* as "the slime that has passed for 'journalism.'" Lindsay Waters of Harvard University Press, who is editing a volume of de Man's essays from the 1950s, counters that "It will not do . . . to attack journalism." De Man himself wrote during the 1960s for *The New York Review of Books*, Waters points out: "For him it was part of the intellectual's job to try to convey complex ideas for as general an audience as would receive them, despite the risks of distortion [and] the need to make deadline."

Miller defends the value of the mature de Man's textualist approach, arguing that it provides the tools necessary to read de Man's early work. Allan Stoekl of Yale rejects that argument. De Man's later writings, he argues, are "extremely elaborate devices" that "preclude the possibility of any moral or political critique or analysis of his early work." If we adopt de Man's approach, Stoekl writes, "we cannot justify even asking about the motives, desires, and responsibility of the (un)committed intellectual." The de Man case, he concludes, exposes the limitations of de Man's theory.

Responses provides an opportunity to reconsider Derrida's maxim that "there is nothing outside the text." Gerald Graff, of Northwestern University, defends Derrida's statement as meaning that "all social phenomena can be usefully viewed as 'texts.'" He's right that this premise "has proved immensely useful to Marxists, feminists, new historicists, and other socially-oriented scholars who have been challenging the established conceptions of the disciplines and their boundaries." But some contributors to this volume seem to take Derrida's maxim literally; they seldom consider social phenomena of any kind. The historicist interpretations, by contextualizing de Man's writings, provide the most persuasive readings of them, and reveal what the textualists failed to see—the variety of ways the young Paul de Man contributed to the Nazi project. □

FILMS.

STUART KLAWANS

Parents
I'm Gonna Git You Sucka
The Cutting Edge II

To get the full effect of *Parents*, you probably should see it knowing nothing in advance. Judged on the evidence of its opening scenes, this satire about middle-class white people in the 1950s will be the sort of film with a lot of retro-chic decor and cha-cha music, where you're supposed to laugh just because the designer dug up a kidney-shaped coffee table for the living-room set. You can guess that Dad will wear cardigan sweaters and play golf, that Mom will bustle cheerily about the house in high heels and full makeup, and that the 10-year-old son, who provides the film's point of view, will find his parents inexplicable and deeply disturbing. There will be a smirking enactment of the primal scene. The grown-ups, while playing bridge, will get embarrassingly drunk on 1950s-style cocktails. At least one Oldsmobile will figure in the story. It will all be too cute for words.

And that, except for the last statement, is the truth about *Parents*. The one thing you won't figure out right away—read on at your peril—is that the film is not cute at all, at least not past its initial come-on. The coffee table, one eventually discovers, is kidney-shaped for good reason. The primal scene is more primal than anticipated. The son, having seemed at first to be the standard-issue oddball, turns out to be justified in the way he introduces himself at his new school. "Tell us something new," his teacher says chirpily. Young Michael (Bryan Madorsky) responds with his notion of good advice: "If you take a black cat and boil it on the stove and peel off the skin and take the bone and chew on the bone, you'll become invisible."

He's not kidding. Michael's father (Randy Quaid) is an Oedipal nightmare who sometimes appears in the spooky lighting that children improvise at Halloween with flashlights stuck under their chins. Michael's mother (Mary Beth Hurt) comes out of a corresponding night-

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mare—the sitcom. She repeatedly appears in skitlike scenes complete with music cues on the exit. One recognizes the intention; but it seems at first to be heavy fun, like a joke told by someone who doesn't really have a sense of humor. What is wrong here?

As the fun gets heavier and heavier, one realizes it's not the storytelling that's off, it's the joke. *Parents* begins with a pose of knowing superiority, of the kind that lets people laugh at white-bread culture while assenting to it. And then, very slowly, the picture turns into something else, converting one's feeble laughter into a robust gag reflex. Directed by Bob Balaban from a screenplay by Christopher Hawthorne. *Parents* does not celebrate the continuing fashion for 1950s suburbia but tries instead to drive a stake through its heart. It is an electroshock cure for the ironic corniness of David Letterman, a berserker's assault on Young Republican chic, and perhaps the nastiest practical joke ever played on people who are just looking for a few laughs on Friday night. I can't figure out how it got made.

At this point, a comparison with *Blue Velvet* is probably necessary. Let me admit I'm in the minority on that one. Granted, the opening sequence in *Blue Velvet* is a classic, suitable for hanging on the museum walls right next to *Un Chien Andalou*. Granted, Dennis Hopper and Dean Stockwell are great. But I think it's a witless film all the same, one that reinforces the virgin-and-whore images it seems to attack. Its thrills are so neatly processed and packaged that the film might better have been called *Blue Velveeta*.

Parents covers some of the same territory, and with none of the virtuosity of David Lynch's picture. The sense of invention is missing. But, in contrast to *Blue Velvet*, there are real, lurid, antisocial thrills to be had here, from Michael's first nightmare to the curious fate of Sandy Dennis, who, in the role of the school psychologist, has been cast both for her formidable eccentricities and for a flesh tone that has never been more pink.

The emerging trouble-in-paradise genre will get yet another entry in mid-February, when Universal Pictures releases Joe Dante's *The 'Burbs*. As of this writing, I have not seen that picture, but I can report that it has a bigger budget and bigger cast, which might mean a lower level of outrage. Whatever its merits turn out to be, don't wait to make the comparison. See *Parents* first—it's good enough that it might not last.

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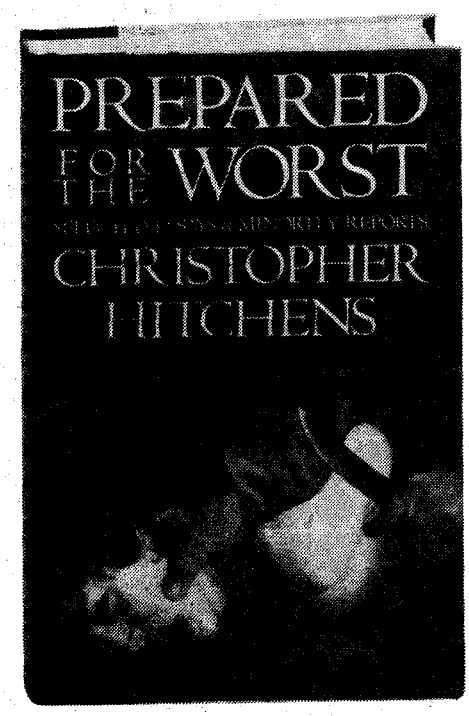

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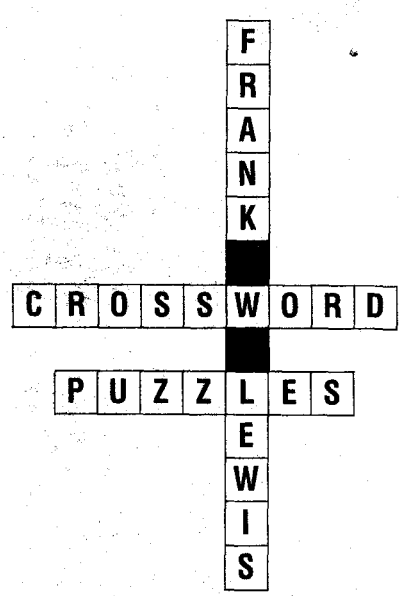

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Once upon a time—say, from 1972 through 1977—Hollywood thought enough of black people to want to exploit them. Its efforts began partly because of social changes too pressing to ignore and partly because an independent filmmaker had scored an unexpected success. (Of course, *all* successes by the independents are unexpected.) Melvin van Peebles, the writer-director-star of *Sweet Sweetback's Baadassss Song*, managed to set off a lot of alarms in Hollywood. Never mind that his film was an unstable mixture of psychedelic camerawork, operatic dramaturgy and flat-out aggression that couldn't have been duplicated on a dare. He had proved, in a big way, that black people had money to spend on the movies and would spend it on stories featuring action, music and themselves.

So Hollywood gave the public what it wanted: *Shaft*, *Superfly*, *The Mack*, *Truck Turner*, *The Slams*, *Cleopatra Jones*. Though these pictures were usually directed by people with names like Jonathan Kaplan, they offered a cartoonlike, highly irreverent depiction of ghetto life that black audiences seemed to recognize and enjoy. The villains in these films had a curious tendency to be white, which caused some anxiety among commentators who were melanin-deficient themselves and had a faulty sense of rhythm. These professional worriers didn't seem to notice that the black community, as seen in these films, was hardly a model of virtue, either.

Then came the Carter Administration. Hollywood, along with the majority culture, went back to pretending that the United States was united. Already, in 1974, the signs had appeared: Bill Cosby and Sidney Poitier in *Uptown Saturday Night*, a picture white people could see without having to go to some inner-city grind house where their shoes would stick to the floor. And then, just as American politics was getting ready to sink the black community out of sight, Hollywood discovered Richard Pryor—a bold, bad black man whom *everybody* would pay to see, no matter how he was cast. The crossover had been made. The blaxploitation picture was dead.

And now it lives again, thanks to a new black independent, Keenen Ivory Wayans, and his hilarious revival of the genre, *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka*. As writer-director-star, Wayans returns to the genre van Peebles founded and turns it into farce, in the manner of *Mad* magazine–style spoofs such as *Airplane!* and *The Naked Gun*. No joke is too dumb, no pose too embarrassing, in this amiably slapdash and utterly engaging story of a young black man who returns to Any Ghetto, U.S.A., after an absence of ten years, only to discover that the heroes he adores—the Shafts and Truck Turners—have disappeared.

Moviegoers who saw Robert Townsend's *Hollywood Shuffle* will remember Wayans as the large, strongly built member of the cast who tended to play the macho roles. The question he poses in his new film is, What makes him think he can be a black hero? He's big, yes. But in *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka* he has come back from the Army with a chestful of medals for accomplishments such as shorthand—he served as a secretary. He is so innocent and deep-down good that the dew all but sparkles around his eyes. He cannot forget how that family of midgets used to bully him around the neighborhood.

Yet it falls to him to defeat Mr. Big and clean up the ghetto. Soon he has located all the old black heroes, played with gusto by blaxploitation veterans Bernie Casey, Isaac Hayes, Jim Brown, Antonio Fargas and Steve James. About the only one missing from the lineup is Pam Grier—a considerable lack, to my mind. Except when she was around, the blaxploitation pictures were never great vehicles for women. Ja'net DuBois is excellent as Wayans's mother, who over-protects him with the help of a few kung fu moves and an uproariously obvious stunt double. Dawnn Lewis, as the love interest, brings a deadpan charm to one of the film's less rewarding roles.

I'm Gonna Git You Sucka has been playing for a while in Detroit, Chicago and other stops on the Any Ghetto, U.S.A., circuit. It recently showed up, all but unheralded, in New York. I understand the distribution strategy has been working, and the film is making money. Congratulations to Keenen Ivory Wayans. May he prosper; and may the more thoughtful and challenging of the black independents, such as Billy Woodberry and Charles Burnett, find audiences for their pictures, too.

From Wendy Lidell of the International Film Circuit comes the information that the number of foreign-language films exhibited in the U.S. has dropped 55 percent over the past 16 years. Lidell points to two main reasons for the drop: the increasing cost of theatrical distribution, and the growing dominance of the ancillary markets, meaning broadcast and cable television and home video. If a film is hard to watch on TV (because of subtitling or dubbing), it is that much less likely to make it into the movie houses. In 1986, only sixteen imported films earned more than $500,000 in the United States, and half of those were in English. What this means, of course, is that we Americans are 55 percent more ignorant of the world around us than we were at the height of the Vietnam War, which is not a pretty thought.

Lidell and the International Film Circuit have therefore begun to bypass the distribution system with a series called The Cutting Edge, now in its second year. The current six-film package, which has just finished a run at New York's Film Forum, will travel over the next six months to media centers, university cinemas, museums and repertory art houses in twenty cities: Ithaca, Huntington and Rhinebeck in New York; Portland, Oregon; and Philadelphia, Washington, Cleveland, Boston, St. Louis, St. Paul, Houston, Berkeley, San Francisco, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Pittsburgh, Santa Fe, Austin and Boulder. Keep an eye open, and you might catch some of the following.

The Eve of Ivan Kupalo is the film that is being most heavily touted by The Cutting Edge. Directed by Yuri Illyenko (who is best known as the cinematographer for Sergei Paradjanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*), the film is a CinemaScope fantasy based on a story by Gogol. Unseen since the Soviet government shelved it twenty years ago, *The Eve of Ivan Kupalo* presents itself as Ukrainian national cinema. To contemporary audiences, though, it belongs not so much to a place as a time. This is a film from 1968, directed with the anything goes spirit that respected no borders. In fact, the picture reminded me not of the Ukraine but of the weather in Chicago: If you don't like what you've got, wait five minutes and something different will come along. The something different might be a landscape with pastel cattle grazing on the hills, or a solarized dream scene, or a staged drama with Catherine the Great and Potemkin riding through, or an anti-gravity sequence created with a wink at Marc Chagall. It's colorful to a fault, pleasantly disorienting and (since it's only a small dose of 1968) rather refreshing compared with all the controlled performances one sees nowadays.

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Macao, or Beyond the Sea by the Swiss filmmaker Clemens Klopfenstein tells the story of a linguist from Zurich who gets on a plane bound for Stockholm and somehow, following a crash, washes ashore on the title island. He realizes quickly enough that the people are speaking Chinese but can't give up the idea that they should be somewhere in the Baltic. Perhaps the Chinese are refugees, he reasons, given their own island by the famously accommodating Swedes. Or maybe they're Mongols, deported by the Soviet Union. While the linguist goes on stubbornly refusing to understand he's in the South China Sea, his wife, back in Zurich, mourns his loss in the plane crash. She also shows a mysterious ability to contact him by yodeling. Klopfenstein presents all this quite calmly and literally, at a relaxed pace. There's plenty of time to observe the scenery and think about the friendly customs of the people on Macao, and also to understand the fate of the linguist long before he catches on himself. Of the films I saw in The Cutting Edge II, this was my favorite—a sweet-natured, somewhat sentimental but wholly unpretentious fable.

The Jester, by José Alvaro Morais, is anything but unpretentious. It's a wildly ambitious attempt to summarize all Portuguese history, from the establishment of sea power in the twelfth century to the departure from Angola and the failure of socialist revolution in the mid-1970s. As if that were not enough, Morais makes the viewer peel back layer after layer of storytelling. The plot is about the efforts of a group of filmmakers to present *O Bobo (The Jester)*, a nineteenth-century play about twelfth-century Portugal. These same filmmakers have been involved in a television drama about the colonial wars of the 1970s. On top of that, they are caught up in a real-life drama of their own, in which one of them, an ex-revolutionary, tries to sell a leftover arms cache and is murdered for it. The stories intersect, at various levels of reality. One's own level of involvement varies from absorption to exhaustion.

Anne-Marie Miéville, who has collaborated with Jean-Luc Godard for a number of years, is represented by her first feature-length film, *My Favorite Story*. A drama about three generations of women, it is studied, elliptical and somewhat disappointing. As one expects of certain French productions, the characters all have excellent taste in music and talk like psychoanalysts. But I did not expect Miéville to be so conventional in her thinking or so stolid in her direction. Evidently her partner is the one with the sense of humor.

I did not see Derek Jarman's *The Last of England*—which is entirely my fault, since it also played in the New York Film Festival—but I did catch the final film in the series, Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Dust in the Wind*. Hou was also represented in last fall's festival, with an honorable but dull effort at Taiwanese neorealism, *Daughter of the Nile*. At the time, I thought there had to be something more to his growing reputation than what I had seen. *Dust in the Wind* turns out to have been the answer. From its first, startling image, the film is an engrossing and unexpected drama about young people from the villages of Taiwan on the scuffle in the big city. Sharply observant, formally assured, it arrives like urgent news from the other side of the world.

Without The Cutting Edge II, that news might not have been delivered. I would urge people in and around the twenty cities on the circuit to support the program and to watch for The Cutting Edge III, coming next year to a theater near you. □

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*Wanker called Cockburn and Hitchens, whose own new book, *Prepared for the Worst*, shares almost all the attributes listed above (except perhaps the range of Vico) "Damon and Pythias." Hitchens prefers the role of Damon, hence Cockburn is Pythic. Of course, Wanker could have been trying to write "pissy" or "pathetic," his brain addled by perennial bouts of self-abuse.

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ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Christian Boltanski

I came across an instructive early photograph by Man Ray in the recent exhibition given his work from the so-called New York years (1913-21) by the Zabriskie Gallery in Manhattan. He was much under the impish spell of Marcel Duchamp at the time, and for just that reason his work sometimes affords a certain glimpse into the rather less scrutable agendas of Duchamp himself. The photograph is of bed sheets hanging on lines and billowing gently in the wind—a tiny gelatin silver print from 1920 with the striking title *Moving Sculpture*. The title identifies the blown linen as what Duchamp designated "ready-mades"—works of art ready to hand amid the banal appurtenances of everyday life, although (and this is the mark of the disciple) the sheets themselves are prettier than the characteristic ready-made, chosen, as a general rule, by the criterion of aesthetic indistinction. "The danger to be avoided lies in aesthetic delectation," Duchamp wrote of his most notorious ready-made, the urinal he titled *Fountain* and endeavored to exhibit in 1917; but almost everything done by Man Ray, who constituted the Silver Age of Dada, was aesthetically delectable.

Moving Sculpture situates itself at the beginning of an important episode in the history of sculpture, broadening the material resources available from marble, bronze and wood to cloth. It also, of course, makes a precocious contribution to the genre of kinetic sculpture: Calder made his first abstract moving constructions, designated "mobiles" by Duchamp, in 1931, though the mobile that every Culturally Literate American can identify did not take form until somewhat later. Whatever the case, *Moving Sculpture* carried forward the enterprise of turning the sow's ears of everyday objects into the silken purses of works of art—transfiguring the commonplace, as I have termed the process. But apart from their ordinariness and the aesthetic effect of their waving whiteness, nothing is made of the fact that they are, after all, bed sheets.

Much of the interest of *Moving Sculpture* would disappear if the title of the work were lost, or if it merely bore the title *Bed Sheets, New York, 1920*. Someone like Steichen might have shown laundry hanging in a New York yard, and we would be impressed by the formal composition made by curve against curve and, just possibly, by the fact that the subject matter of art photography had been extended to include those items of domestic utility as a motif for formal study (as against, perhaps, a photograph by Lewis Hine of the backs of tenements, which are identified as such by lines of drying sheets). Similarly, I can imagine, barely, Duchamp extending his set of ready-mades by hanging a bed sheet or two on a clothesline, though it would have been typical of him to invent a funny title (*Drapeaux* to pun on *draps*, perhaps) and to ink some nonsense line at the hem. Only after the middle 1960s might an artist have been able to make a work consisting of bed sheets, called, flatly, *Bed Sheets*. Such a work could hardly be more different from a ready-made: For the first time in the works I have been considering, the sheets might have become transformed into metaphors of themselves, collecting out of a set of human associations the deep sorts of meanings that bed sheets have in our lives. Think of how powerful a metaphor Joyce created in *Finnegans Wake* with the washerwomen, commenting upon and then, as priestesses, cleansing the sacramental stains inscribed by sex, sleep, sickness, birth and death—their sheets as blanched pages on which we impose the tragic texts of our finitude.

This point is made through a remarkable work by the French conceptual artist Christian Boltanski, which I saw at the Marian Goodman Gallery, around the corner on 57th Street from the Zabriskie. Made of brightly colored items of children's clothing—skirts, pants, tights, blouses, jackets, T-shirts—it looked, as one entered the somewhat darkened space of the gallery, like an avant-garde wall hanging made up of ready-to-hand things (a little in the spirit of the aggregations of manufactured objects by the artist Armani). The first impression, that the gaily colored pieces of (I surmise) cheap clothing were simply the materials for a wall hanging the way scraps and snips of cloth are the material for a patchwork quilt, starts to dissolve when one notices four lamps connected to outlets by bare electrical cords and begins to think that the illumination they offer, and they themselves, are part of the work rather than sources of illumination provided by the gallery to facilitate our appreciation of the wall hanging. One begins to think that the tiny garments are the subject of the work rather than merely the materials the artist has seized upon to fabricate a clothes piece. (In the Lila Acheson Wallace wing of the Metropolitan Museum, there is a gate by Jim Dine fashioned in part of distorted hand tools: wrenches, screwdrivers, pliers. But these are cunning ornaments, not the subject of the piece. A similar work, responding to impulses parallel to Boltanski's, would be not only made of tools but about those tools.) And the cheap lamps enhance the sense that we are in the presence not just of clothing—a display, say, that shows what the children of the Western world were wearing in 1989—but of clothing that has somehow survived its wearers, been left behind by vanished kids. Left behind and then improvised into a memorial to their wearers, the garments are made somehow self-metaphorical and almost unendurably poignant. It becomes, so to speak, a soft Wailing Wall, and the little, now unbearably bright pieces of clothing seem ranked, like the names of the dead soldiers on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Like them but even more touching, because of their anonymity: These are mass-produced things, the kind you buy from stacks in discount houses, and could belong to Anychild, as if this were a memorial to childhood as such.

Now one notices that the title is *Fête de Pourim*. How different this is from Man Ray's title, which situates his sheets in the context of art, wresting them from the world in which bedclothes have a practical and moral locus, making them over into things of artistic appreciation. And how different again from the ha-ha titles of Duchamp, who was calling into question the entire institutional fabric in which titles and artworks have some stable relationship. *Fête de Pourim*, for us, today, has to connect the children's wear with the Jewish holiday, and the meaning could be that children get new things to wear and the clothing is celebratory. But the raw light from the lamps, the crisscross of electrical wires, suggest instead that the work concerns a Jewish disaster, that these emblemize the discarded garments of children led naked to the gas chambers, collected together and mounted to form a hecatomb, the best we can do against the total disappearance from consciousness of children whose identity other than as children we do not even know. It be-

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comes a piece of Holocaust art, and if so then perhaps the only convincing example I have encountered of a genre I would have thought impossible but now recognize as merely terribly difficult.

Boltanski's work invites an inevitable comparison with that of Anselm Kiefer (see my column of January 2, in these pages). The way that *Fête de Pourim* transformed the space of the gallery into that of a shrine, just as it transformed the aesthetic relationship into one of contemplative sorrow, could not have contrasted more vividly with the busy galleries in which Kiefer's work hung at the Museum of Modern Art, filled with baffled viewers bumping into one another as they pored over lists of symbols. And the change in vision Boltanski's work undergoes, in which items from the *Lebenswelt* are first taken up into art in an avant-garde way but then returned to the *Lebenswelt* to become metaphors for themselves, epitomizes what I believe he aims at as an artist. "His highest goal," according to an essay by Mary Jane Jacob, "is for his art to be mistaken for life itself." The clothes are, after all, not real relics. This is a work of art. The receptionist at the Marian Goodman told me that the artist had installed the work himself, stapling the garments directly to the wall. For all I know he purchased them from K-mart, or out of bins on 14th Street. The work incorporates the boundary between reality and representation.

The Boltanski show at the Marian Goodman closed early in January, as did the lovely Man Ray show at the Zabriskie. But The New Museum of Contemporary Art (at 583 Broadway in Manhattan) is devoting its generous spaces entirely to Boltanski's work until February 12. Many of the works approach *Fête de Pourim* in spirit, though the only one that resembles it in substance is perhaps *Les Habits de François C.*, done in 1972, which is composed of twenty-four black and white photographs, separately framed, each of a separate item of boy's clothing. There is, importantly, nothing distinctive about the garments, and yet the overall feeling of the work is uncomfortably forensic, as if this were an exhibit in the sense of the term that has application in the law court or the police station, a photographic record of what François C. wore. But the wardrobe, distributed into its components and then reassembled as a conjunction of distinct items, is so submerged in the ordinariness of ordinary life that, apart from the age and sex and perhaps class of the wearer (and possibly the nationality, since the shoes are too neat to belong to an American boy and imply European ownership), there is very little to go on in recovering a specific identity for François C., *un garçon comme les autres*. And given the banality and in a sense the universality of the objects, the interesting interpretive question is why they should be photographed. But there is, after all, something banal and universal in photographs themselves, which allows them to become self-metaphorical; and it is as such that they enter as components in the most impressive of Boltanski's works in the New Museum show.

I have often meditated on the power of those photographic images made central in contemporary art by the genius of Andy Warhol—images of faces everybody recognizes. Nobody has to ask to whom these images belong: the faces of Jackie, Liz, Marilyn, Elvis and of Andy himself, like their names, form part of the common consciousness of anyone who participates in the culture of our times. They are as familiar as the flag or the dollar bill. Of course there will come a time when people will need to have them identified, the culture no longer being defined (in part) by the immediate knowledge of who Marilyn or Elvis was, just as there are perhaps few not special scholars of theatrical history who carry the knowledge of what Sarah Bernhardt or Lily Langtry looked like. Every American knows the faces of Washington and Lincoln, and perhaps of Kennedy—but who save the historian knows, straight off, Blaine, Polk or even Madison? This kind of knowledge defines a consciousness, and when, for example, we take someone through a family album, explaining to whom these images belong—the dog that ate the birthday cake, Elsie as a baby, Dad when he bought the De Soto, Mom at her graduation—we are endeavoring to widen our consciousness to include this outsider, connecting him or her to our past and to the icons of our life. To be part of the family is to know the images that outsiders have to have explained to them.

But now consider the photographs one finds in old frames in secondhand shops. We can identify the faces and figures in them with about the degree of success we have with the clothing of François C. They are irrecoverably alien. All we know is that someone took the picture or had it taken who cared enough about the subject to have the picture framed—and then, gradually or suddenly, nobody cared

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and the picture wound up as part of the detritus of a dissolved consciousness. Think of studying the faces in the group portrait of the graduating class of some unspecified Central High School. In our culture, when the last one dies who knows, without having to be told, to whom an image belongs, that is the final death of the owner of the image. Nothing is more deeply anonymous than the image of an individual face nobody recognizes. The equation of unrecognizability of images that were once instantly recognized with death itself—with the death of memory—is the animating metaphor of Boltanski's characteristic works.

Consider Boltanski's *L'album de photographies de la famille D. entre 1939 et 1954*. It is a work that splits the viewers into two classes, those who are members or close acquaintances of the family D., and the rest of us. It is an array of rephotographed and enlarged snapshots, framed, in ten rows of fifteen images each, and they are endearingly inept, as pictures in family albums always are: badly composed, amateurishly cropped, as often out of focus as in, over- or under-exposed, taken by people of people who mean everything to one another and nothing to anyone else. But they are also exactly *us* as humans: fathers, mothers, children; at the beach or in the important moments of little lives—marriages, confirmations, birthdays, in front of the new family home. The French refer to snapshots as *clichés*, and nothing could be more appropriate as a description of the monumental significance in everyday life *of* everyday life itself. This is underscored by the fact that the family D. is evidently French, and by the dates, the period documented including the years of the occupation. I find enormously touching the thought that the simple camera snapped at all through those years, that life went on, and if the war cast its shadow, as it must have, over family life, an effort must be made to discover it. Under whatever difficult or even terrifying circumstances, the family got together, its members said whatever the French say when we say "Cheese!" and put their hands on one another's un-self-conscious shoulders.

By far the most powerful work here, only partly in consequence of its size, is the stupendous *Monument: Les Enfants de Dijon*, made in 1986. Its primary constituents are photographs of children we certainly do not know and who are now perhaps not known to anyone—mere faces of mere children, moving in their forgottenness (think how differently we would think of Man Ray's *Moving Sculpture* if "moving" were understood in *this* sense). The photographs are arranged up and down one of the great walls of the main gallery at the New Museum, each separated from the next by distances large in proportion to the images themselves, as if to give each a maximal dignity and to underscore the importance, to someone, of the individual memorialized. Each photograph is illuminated by one to three lamps, again connected to outlets by exposed electrical wires, arranged in rough approximation of candelabra. The lighting, the rephotographed photos, the circumstances of their array, connote, as did the *Fête de Pourim*, the death of a cohort: The children smile in an official way, their eyes beam or are troubled, their hair is neat. How sad to think that the faces are as anonymous as shoes or socks now. It is difficult to think of a work of art that comes closer to embodying what one supposes Virgil meant by *lachrimae rerum*—"the tears of things."

I rather wish this work had sole occupancy of the main gallery, which instead contains a number of works in much the same spirit, though on a less ambitious scale. For one begins comparing them in terms of composition, or scale, and the spell is broken or nearly broken as the criteria that have application primarily to works of art take over, and the powerful connection between childhood and death is weakened through repetition and variation (the presence in the gallery of a window through which we can view a shadow-work prevents a spontaneous make-believe that this is a hall of memorials). Taken separately each of these works could, I suppose, emblemize a family shrine, or one in a village school or church, but somehow assembling the works in a gallery somewhat compromises the intention of the artist. In *Lessons of Darkness*, the catalogue that accompanies this exhibition (both are the work of Lynn Gumpert and Mary Jane Jacob), Boltanski is quoted this way: "For me painting isn't provocative or moving, only life is. But I am an artist and therefore all I do is termed art. One day, of course, it's forcibly discovered. The fascinating moment for me is when the spectator hasn't registered the art connection, and the longer I can delay this association the better."

Plainly, the emblemata of the art museum—the admissions desk, the posters for sale, the catalogues and the guards—counteract whatever devices the artist may have used to postpone or delay the recognition that after all this is art and not life. It is nevertheless a tribute to this artist that, after we have crossed the threshold of the museum, it is life rather than art that asserts itself. There is, to be sure, a tension between art and life that one cannot help but feel when one turns away from a work like *Monument: Les Enfants de Dijon* to see what else there is to see, and the feelings elicited by the work give way to the suppressed acknowledgment that this is, in the end, a work among works, part of a corpus, something that has behind it the history of Dada, Surrealism, Pop and Fluxus, upon which, as art, it makes as many comments as it makes on the sad real world.

The show is to travel: It will be at the Vancouver Art Gallery in Vancouver, British Columbia (March 15-May 15); the University Art Museum, Berkeley, California (July 19-September 17); and The Power Plant, Toronto (November 24-January 7, 1990). The Vancouver Gallery is a converted courthouse with spaces that may make it slightly unaccommodating for ordinary exhibitions, but exactly right for this one. □

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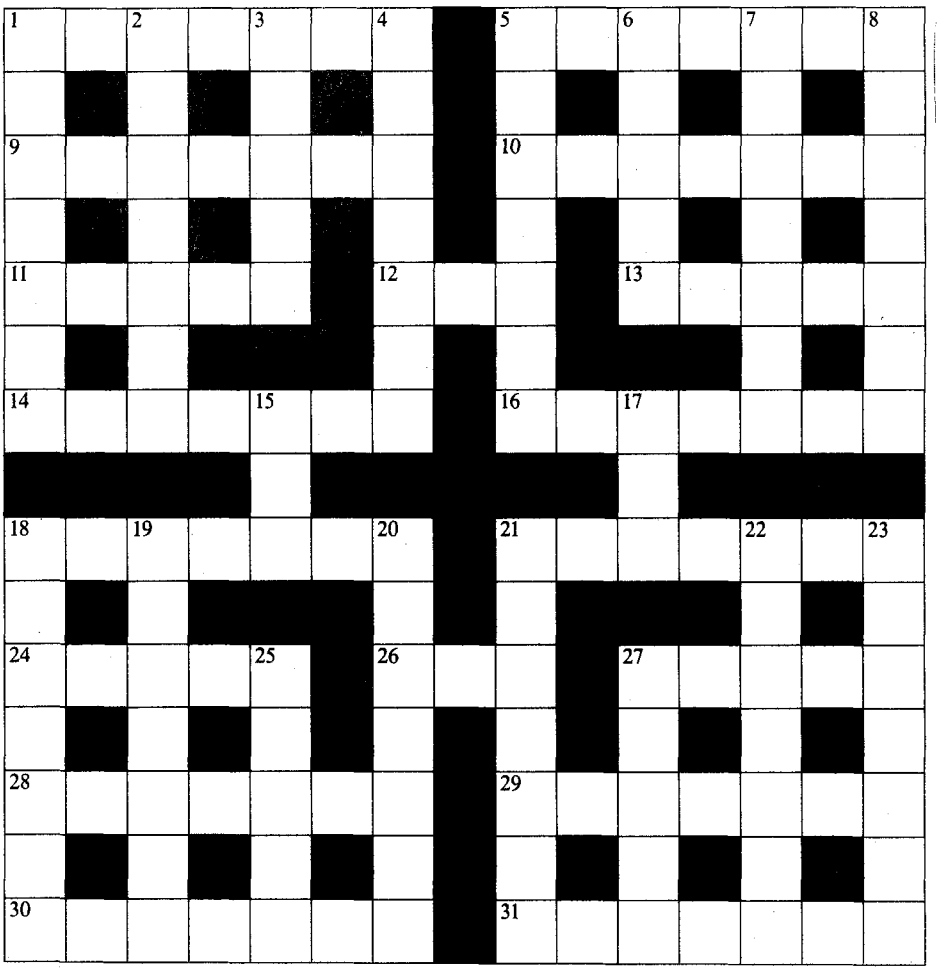
L	A	T	A	K	I	A	■	T	A	K	E	O	F	F
L	■	S	■	E	■	G	■	I	■	E	■	L	■	E
J	O	I	N	T	P	O	S	S	E	S	S	I	O	N
A	■	D	■	H	■	N	■	T	■	N	■	N	■	D
R	E	E	F	E	R	S	■	S	L	O	U	G	H	S
■	■	■	■	B	■	■	■	■	■	I	■	■	■	■
D	R	I	V	E	R	S	■	L	A	N	T	E	R	N
E	■	N	■	S	■	P	■	A	■	T	■	R	■	A
F	R	U	I	T	L	E	S	S	S	E	A	R	C	H
E	■	R	■	O	■	A	■	C	■	R	■	H	■	U
C	O	N	I	F	E	R	■	A	M	E	R	I	C	A
T	■	E	■	I	■	E	■	R	■	S	■	N	■	T
S	E	D	A	T	E	D	■	S	I	T	W	E	L	L

Crossword Puzzle No. 2229

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and 5 The old page title, as well as old weapons, might be evocative of frills and *The Pale-face*. (7,3,4)
9 No longer very ordinary looking, to state the pertinent facts. (7)
10 Decked out in old-fashioned style—with roses in the classical lullaby. (7)
11 Such singers are relatively 27 across, and like about 17 arranged for them. (5)
12 and 15 down One should occupy a number with a reputedly good worker. (6)
13 Were they coming by air in WWI? (They evidently showed a certain amount of pull.) (5)
14 Three-foot weapon found on most old-time naval vessels. (7)
16 In general, associated with Palestine and Syria years ago. (N.B., it's found in a very small passage!) (7)
18 Not being open-minded, I got in bed this way. (7)
21 One of the most common is the story in a periodical. (7)
24 Is Duchamp's descender typical of them? (5)
26 A Portuguese colony a long time ago, presently changed. (3)
27 Descriptive of a noisy cow, but having less value. (5)
28 If you find such a tax nice, it wouldn't be right. (7)
29 Where 6 down has gone, if you start off with 1 and 18 down. (7)
30 and 31 Pershing direct hits? They could paralyze a country! (7,7)

DOWN

1 and 18 It sounds as though you should purchase a festive decoration for the pampered girl friend—but this has put many to sleep. (3,4,7)
2 An afterthought might be in a trite version of one who may have something to say about race. (7)
3 Explosion of a salvo—but not quite in rounds. (5)
4 "Can" and "must" both have to be included, in a way—but it would hardly be in a public place. (7)
5 Prohibit, *inter alia*, the country being this? (7)
6 Annie's benefactor, though a minister from sunrise to sunset? (5)
7 The church music is evidently ready to be played according to a philosophical system of rules. (7)
8 Talk about a fist being made! That's one way to keep you happy! (7)
15 See 12 across
17 Quite a bit of property, possibly. (3)
18 See 1 down
19 The fish is not exactly gone, but possibly dug out of the inside of it. (7)
20 Understand, Mr. Gore—this might describe what one computes with! (7)
21 One of them might be considered brave, but 6 down gets up with a lot of trouble. (7)
22 A bossy show of affection, possibly on the forehead. (7)
23 As green as this might be, still makes one angry! (7)
25 Where a little man wasn't astir, possibly. (5)
27 The end of the problem shows such a module. (5)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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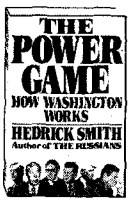

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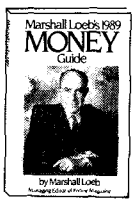

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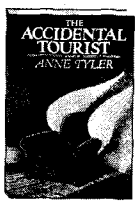

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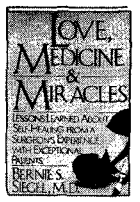

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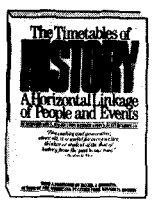

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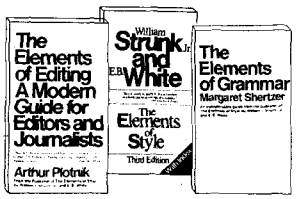

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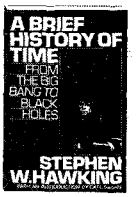

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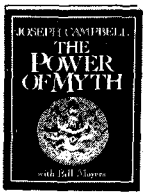

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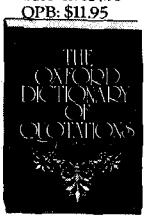

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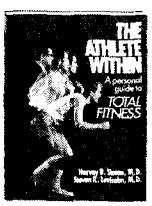

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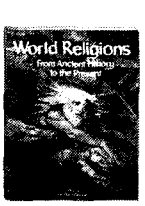

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